

MASLOW

Written by

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EXT. MILLER HOUSE - AXTELL - PRESENT DAY

A rainy, July evening. The Indianapolis countryside.

Thick rain droplets pierce into the roof of the small, sweet MILLER house. Flashes of lightning illuminate the yard, scattered by the seconds.

We slowly push in, closer... and closer...

A front window sits slightly cracked open. We enter...

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

We hear rain drumming atop the roof from inside. Lightning flashes through the windows every other second.

The living room is placed right at the front of the house. It's comfy, organized, and homey.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

We turn down a narrow hall extended from the living room's side. Coating the walls: family portraits, artwork, school awards, and a plethora of antique, wooden crosses.

We see four bedroom doors, one directly ahead at the hall's end. It's cracked open, unlike the others.

Over the rain, we hear slight sounds of rustling sheets from the cracked door.

It gets louder... it stops. It gets louder again... it stops.

A light whimper escapes the same door. It's from the voice of young MASLOW MILLER (8 y.o.).

He calls from his room:

MASLOW

Mom...?

Pause. No answer, his small voice is washed out by the rain.

MASLOW (CONT'D)

(a little louder)

Mom...?!

Still nothing. He sounds more distressed, as if he's fighting a nightmare.

A single, warm light suddenly beams through the cracked door.

We hold in a silence, then...

MASLOW (O.S.) (CONT'D)
MOM!!! MOMMY!!! MOMMY, HELP ME!!!
PLEASE!!!

Maslow's calls are followed with a traumatizing screech. It sounds like an animal.

Another door along the hall swings open:

MARCUS (mid-40s), Maslow's father, exits their bedroom in a sprint. MARY ANNE (mid-40s) follows right behind as Maslow continues to scream:

MASLOW (O.S.) (CONT'D)
GET- GET OUT! GET OUT OF-! STOP!

Marcus bursts into Maslow's room, disappearing out of our view. Mary Anne tries the same, when...

MASLOW (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(struggling w/ something)
LEAVE...! ME...! ALONE...!

CRASH

--AN ENORMOUS PICTURE FRAME IS FLUNG OUT THE DOOR. It just barely misses Mary Anne.

It CRASHES into a wall, spraying broken glass. Mary Anne screams.

The third bedroom door opens: MELANIE (17 y.o.), Maslow's sister.

MELANIE
(to Mary Anne)
What's happening?!?

MARY ANNE
GO BACK TO YOUR ROOM!

Marcus calls from the bedroom.

MARCUS (O.S.)
(struggling)
MARY ANNE! GET IN HERE!

Melanie dashes back into her room as Mary Anne hops over the glass. A shard nicks her in the heel. She lets out a yelp, but enters Maslow's room anyway.

Melanie reappears in the hall, now wearing slippers. She hops over the glass. We see the photo through its shattered frame:

It's of young Maslow at his first communion. A bright smile rests on his face.

Melanie enters the bedroom.

INT. MASLOW'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Melanie halts in her tracks, idle from what she sees:

Her little brother, foaming from the mouth, eyes rabid. He swings a lit floor lamp at their parents like a long-spear.

Marcus tries to grab at him, barely missing his swings. Mary Anne covers behind Marcus.

MASLOW
LEAVE ME ALONE! I DON'T WANT YOU
HERE! FUCK YOU!

MARCUS
Mas, put it down, MAS-! Put the
light down-!

Maslow lifts the lamp like a javelin.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
No- DON'T!

MASLOW
I SAID, GO...

Maslow hurls the lamp over his parents.

MASLOW (CONT'D)
...AWAY!

IT SHATTERS- snuffing out the only light in the room.

Any light now enters steamily by scattered lightning through a cracked window. It's over Maslow's bed.

Marcus tackles his son onto the bed, trying to pin him down. Maslow screams and struggles with his Dad's restraints.

MARCUS
Mary Anne! Help me!

She does. Melanie still watches in shock, beginning to cry.

Maslow curses at them with a vile, growling, unrecognizable voice... at least for an 8 year-old.

MASLOW
(growling)
GET OFF ME! I'LL KILL YOU!

Droplets of rain begins to leak through the cracked window over the bed.

We push slowly to the window, the Miller family now out of our view. We hear the struggling continue as we push entirely out the window and into the rain, when...

Maslow lets out a final, painful scream:

MARCUS
AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!

Then, accompanied by the eery screeching of violin strings...

MASLOW

--CREDITS FOLLOW OVER THE RAIN & MUSIC.

We slowly move back from the rain...

INT. BAR - AIRPORT - EARLY MORNING

The present, a month later. We don't re-enter the Miller home, but rather the slick glass of an airport bar window.

It's quiet and nearly empty, having just opened. News stations and ESPN play on the overhead TVs. A single waitress manages customers.

At the center of the bar sits FATHER ABRAHAM-- "ABE" --AUBRY (mid to late 30s). He adjusts his reading glasses as he scrolls through emails on his laptop.

To his left: used dishes with only remains of an eaten breakfast, an empty coffee cup, and two opened Bibles.

An email notification appears on his laptop: "*Gates of Heaven Catholic Church.*" Abe clicks on it.

On his screen appears multiple memes of Pope Francis (nothing too risqué). Under them:

"Laughs for the layover. Travel well and have a safe mission.

- **Father Nelson :)**"

Abe smiles.

He clicks open a new tab and searches the word: "Axtell"

Nothing appears. He tries: "Axtell, Indianapolis"

Nothing, again. Only obituaries of folks named "Axtell."

Abe glares at one of his bibles. It's flipped open to a page with "Axtell" penciled at the top.

He types in one more word... "Exorcism."

He searches. To no surprise, the first to appear are articles and clips from the 1973 film, "The Exorcist." He pulls a clip from the flood and plays it:

It's the iconic finale! Father Karras takes Pazuzu in him and sacrifices himself, throwing his body from a window.

Abe smirks and shakes his head.

Another gentlemen, a bit younger than Abe (Late 20s), sees this as well. His head perks up from the other end of the bar. He smiles at Abe watching the clip.

WAITRESS

You all finished, father?

Abe jolts to attention, surprised by the waitress. He tries to hide his laptop screen discreetly.

ABE

Hm-? Oh. Another coffee, please.
Here...

Abe hands her a twenty.

ABE (CONT'D)

Keep the rest. Thank you.

She refills his cup and takes his dishes.

Abe returns to his laptop. He pauses the film clip and scrolls through the related videos listed to its side. One draws his attention...

"Possessed: A Modern Exorcism," a news piece. He clicks.

The video of a modern, rather disturbing exorcism on a woman.

The woman in the video contorts and struggles under restraint. She looks more like she's being attacked than saved by the acting priest.

The stranger from the end of the bar still watches Abe.

Abe cringes at the video, then sharply closes his laptop. He removes his reading glasses, looks ahead, and sighs.

His stare ahead becomes more hypnotized. He sees the wall behind the bar. It's completely painted in liquor bottles...

The stranger sees this as well. Abe doesn't know he's there.

Abe gently removes a flask from his pocket, trying to hide it from anyone's view. He moves it to his coffee. Then...

MAN

(recounting)

"Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the spirit, groan inwardly as we wait--"

Abe looks up at the stranger and retreats his flask. Abe smiles at him, but is too awkward to say anything.

MAN (CONT'D)

Sorry. I didn't mean-

The stranger tries to hide away.

ABE

No. No, it's okay. You catholic?

MAN

No.

ABE

Oh.

MAN

(joking)

"Church of clinical psychiatry."

Abe nods. He smiles.

MAN (CONT'D)

My mother liked that verse.

Baptist, but um...

(slight pause)

How bout you?

Abe looks to him, confused.

The stranger points to Abe's bibles.

MAN (CONT'D)
It's highlighted.

ABE
...family favorite.

The stranger identically, and awkwardly, smiles then nods.

They sit in an overly long silence. Then...

MAN
"A *psychiatrist and a priest*
actually walk into a bar," and...
(laughing)
...have nothing to say to each
other.

Abe laughs as well.

MAN (CONT'D)
Could take pointers from each
other? That'd be fun.

ABE
Hm?

MAN
Personally, I don't think it's too
different, what we do. Your words
devote to Christ. Mine...? Don't
know- Benjamin Rush?

Abe chuckles.

ABE
Who's that?

MAN
Obviously someone not as popular.

Abe smiles again, enjoying this stranger's company.

MAN (CONT'D)
But, you know... same kind of
patients: folks looking for
answers. Same code of privacy.
(beat)
Same weight on your shoulders...
wanting to do right. Help people.
Any poor schmuck who wants it-
including ourselves, I assume.

Abe agrees. He lifts his coffee mug to that.

ABE
Cheers.

The man smiles and mimics Abe. They drink.

MAN
You do get to fight those... "demon-
things" in the movies, so... 1-0
you, Father.

The man smiles. Abe cocks his head at him, caught in the act.

MAN (CONT'D)
I, um... I saw your laptop. Sorry,
I didn't mean--

ABE
--That's okay...

MAN
Bet that kind of stuff is funny to
you though...

The intercom interrupts their conversation:

AIRPORT INTERCOM (V.O.)
Ladies & Gentlemen, this is a
boarding call for Flight 268,
Boston to Indianapolis. This is a
boarding call for...

Abe gathers his belongings.

ABE
That's me.

The stranger pulls a pen from his pocket and takes a bar
napkin at his side.

MAN
Wait! Here...

He writes something down and hands it to Abe...

A phone number.

MAN (CONT'D)
Even the helpers need help
sometimes. Non-denominational,
too...

Abe smiles.

ABE
 Thanks. Doctor...?
 (waiting for his name)

MAN/RICHIE
 Farrow, but just call me "Richie."
 Have a good-

He looks at the other bible with a quick glance. Another verse highlighted:

"Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness." (Matthew 10:1)

RICHIE
 Have a safe flight, Father-

ABE
 Call me "Abe."

Abe smiles and leaves.

INT. PLANE - HOURS LATER

Abe sits in a nap, shaking gently from a little turbulence.

We slowly push in on his closed eyes over the sound of the flight captain's voice:

CAPTAIN (V.O.)
 Ladies and gentlemen, this is your
 captain speaking. We'll be settling
 down in what looks like a rainy
 Indianapolis for the next few days-

FLASH CUT: It's less than a second... we see a young girl with a cold, lifeless expression staring right at us- at Abe. Behind her, dark nothingness.

Abe's eyes snap open with a jolt-- a nightmare??

CAPTAIN (V.O.)
 ...so mind a slight bit of
 turbulence during our descent.
 Nothing to worry about..

He collects his short breath and looks out the open window. He watches the rain go by.

EXT. AIRPORT - INDIANAPOLIS - DAY

Abe exits the airport, carrying only a small suitcase and a laptop bag. He looks around, expecting a cab.

PATRICK
Father Aubry!

Abe looks up to see an older man waving from afar. He stands next to a small sedan with a church logo on its side.

The man, PATRICK, approaches Abe.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Father Aubry? Boston, "Gates of
Heaven Church?"

ABE
"Abe."

PATRICK
Deacon Blackwell. "Patrick." Father
Bowers has spoken much about you!

They shake.

I/E. CAR - INDIANAPOLIS - MOMENTS LATER

Abe gazes out the passenger window. They pass across the Indianapolis skyline.

As much as Abe hates to admit it, he misses his home.

EXT. ST. MARY'S CATH CHURCH - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Abe exits the vehicle as he looks upon an enormous cathedral. He smiles.

Patrick exits the car behind him, grabbing Abe's belongings from the trunk. Abe notices.

ABE
I've got that.

Abe gets his things and makes his way towards the church. Patrick stays behind, locking the car. He calls to Abe:

PATRICK
Father Bowers is expecting you in
his office. If you enter the main
hall, take a left-

ABE

That's okay. I know where it is.

Abe moves to the church.

He looks up to a window at the center of the building. A man stands there, watching Abe approach. He smiles.

Abe smiles back at him:

His own priest since birth, FATHER BOWERS (Late 60s/Early 70s).

INT. OFFICE - ST. MARY'S CHURCH - DAY

Bowers hunches over his desk, eager to get a good look at Abe. He's all grown up and finally in the flesh.

Abe examines documents from a file on "Maslow Miller." Patrick watches him do so from a chair at the back.

A photograph of the boy slips out from the file. Abe examines it. Maslow has a cheery grin, he wears a baseball uniform.

ABE

Very young.

BOWERS

Is that an issue?

ABE

Not a preference.

Abe pulls out a legal pad to copy notes from the files.

BOWERS

I received his photo 2 weeks ago. Thought someone had slipped me an old polaroid of you. One of your late dad's photos from little league, but-

(to Patrick)

Oh! Patrick! Let me tell you...

Bowers lights up, excited from the memories of Abe's youthful glory days.

BOWERS (CONT'D)

...Ol' Abe here had one heck of an arm in his prime. Skimpy- he was no older than 10 -but strong. Good on the bat, too-

Abe cuts him off, not interested in nostalgia.

ABE
How long since last contact?

Bowers deflates. He sits back in his chair.

ABE (CONT'D)
Father?

BOWERS
Two days ago. His parents wanted to confirm your arrival.

Abe writes this down. He looks up.

ABE
Any contact with him yourself?

BOWERS
With the boy? No.

Abe writes this as well.

ABE
And just to clarify- I wasn't sure by your email -there's appointed approval by the church, correct?

Patrick speaks up from behind. Bowers turns his chair towards the window.

PATRICK
What anoints an approval?

ABE
Full psychiatric evaluation, medical history, background checks... all routine.
(to Bowers)
Right, father?

Bowers' chair still faces the window. He doesn't reply.

ABE (CONT'D)
Father?

Bowers turns around.

BOWERS
You used to be good at not talking about work. You remember?

ABE

What work was I not talking about
at 10?

Bowers' brightness has changed since he turned back in his
chair. A secret looms on his face.

BOWERS

Patrick, can you give us a minute?

Patrick nods and leaves the room. Abe stops writing and
watches him leave, confused. They're alone now.

Bowers removes a lighter and a pack of cigarettes from his
desk. He lights one in his mouth.

ABE

Father?

Bowers takes a drag and a long look at Abe's face. Then...

BOWERS

Your face got puffier.

ABE

Before I left, you'd told me you
quit.

BOWERS

When we last spoke on the phone, so
did you.

Abe looks to Bowers, still confused...

BOWERS (CONT'D)

Kraken rum and a hint of coffee...

Bowers taps his lips... Abe's breath. Abe sinks in guilt.

ABE

Forgive me, father...

BOWERS

Never mind that.

(beat)

Listen, how many exorcisms have you
done now, Abe?

Abe hesitates. He knows, but isn't proud of it.

ABE

I'm not sure...

BOWERS

You aware of how many exorcists span the country these days?

ABE

There used to be less than 20.

BOWERS

Now, well over 150. Here in the city, over 1,700 requested exorcisms, and that was just last year...

(beat)

But I only call for your help now.

Abe nods, puzzled by Bowers' tone.

BOWERS (CONT'D)

The boy's church is listed in the file.

Abe looks, he takes a minute to find it:

ABE

"Holy Trinity Church. Axtell, Indiana." I figured "Axtell" was a neighborhood extension of St. Mary's.

BOWERS

It's a town. Barely within bounds of Indianapolis. The countryside. Small... Hidden... Lost. "Father Arthur McKinley." He's listed under. An old colleague of mine and St. Mary's. You never knew him.

ABE

A friend?

Bowers hesitates. He dodges the question entirely.

BOWERS

In his youth, I'd say McKinley was a popular one. Something about his passion that was irregular, but fresh to the priesthood.

(beat)

His preferred ideals and methods of belief...?

ABE

Father?

BOWERS
They were "traditional."
"Disagreeable," one could say.

ABE
(giggling)
"Fire & Brimstone?" I've met the
type.

Abe smiles from his confidence. Bowers eyes Abe for a second too long in silence. He takes a long drag with his stare.

BOWERS
Not exactly.

ABE
Why are you telling me this?

BOWERS
Like I said, McKinley was a man of
passion, once deeply respected. But
when his indifference stood in
conflict, all of a sudden, he
disappears for nearly 30 years.
That is until two weeks ago, when
word of this "Maslow Miller"
arrives on my desk. Sent by no
other then the man himself...
(pause)
Do you understand the uniqueness of
this case now?

Abe looks troubled, confused of what Bowers' is getting at.

Bowers hesitates, held by guilt of the request. Then...

BOWERS (CONT'D)
I want you to watch him.

Abe sits in a beat. He's offended.

ABE
The boy.

BOWERS
Yes, but no.

ABE
Like a spy? You're joking...

BOWERS
I am not.

ABE

You're sure? Because to my understanding I was here to enact a serious procedure on a child. Not play "Jack Ryan" on behalf of St. Mary's Church.

BOWERS

The boy takes priority, but-

ABE

To speak frankly, that is the only justifiable reason I agreed to come. Was I right to do so, or not?

BOWERS

In that way, I guess you were mistaken.

ABE

Mistaken or misled?

Pause. Bowers is surprised by Abe's coldness.

Abe catches himself, guilty of his words.

ABE (CONT'D)

Forgive me, Father. I apologize, that was uncalled for.

Bowers looks Abe up and down, worried the spirit of the boy he knew is no longer.

Abe doesn't make eye contact as they sit in silence. Then...

BOWERS

Confession. Now.

ABE

Father, that worked when I was 10, but I'm not that boy any-

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CONFESSION BOOTH - MOMENTS LATER

SHHHWAP

The sliding window of an old, dark confession booth opens.

Through a rusted grate in the wall we see Abe's face, hidden in the shadows.

Bowers sits on the opposite end, facing profile away from Abe. He's also hidden in the darkness.

ABE
Bless me father, for I have sinned.

BOWERS
When was your last confession, my son?

ABE
7 hours ago. Before the airport.

BOWERS
Go ahead...

A long stretch of silence. Abe is unsure what to say. Then...

BOWERS (CONT'D)
Abe?

ABE
I don't know what to...

BOWERS
In a confession?

ABE
No. I... I... I considered
defamation... the Red Sox had a
blow-out, god forgive-

Bowers stops Abe from avoiding the truth:

BOWERS
You've turned cold, son...

Abe sits in silence, unsure how to respond.

ABE
Father, I plead forgiveness for my
sins of desperate consumption and-

BOWERS
There's doubt in you...
Instability. What's troubling you?
(no response)
Your faith..?

ABE
...

BOWERS
Abe?

ABE

I don't know, Father...

BOWERS

It's only human. That's not irregular. What is it?

Abe sits in a beat, unsure whether he wishes to reveal. Then:

ABE

I'm having this dream...

BOWERS

Go on.

Abe hesitates. Then...

ABE

I don't know where I am, but... a woman stands across from me.

BOWERS

What does she look like?

ABE

Young. She wears a sun-dress...

(beat)

It's Ruth, Father.

FLASH CUT: We see the same, young girl from before. She stares at us. We see Abe as well, staring back with a petrified, frozen face.

Bowers is silent. Abe waits for him to react, but Bowers doesn't comply.

ABE (CONT'D)

She says nothing. She only stares and... that's that. I say nothing either. I feel a sensation that I physically can't. I try, but nothing. She only stares at me... lifeless. But I'm just helpless...

(he thinks)

It's been happening for weeks now... Father, maybe it's a message. A warning.

FLASH CUT: Ruth again.

ABE (CONT'D)

I lied before, when I said I didn't know how many missions I'd done. 124. All successful, but... Ruth-

BOWERS

Let us pray.

Abe stops, taken aback by Bowers' interruption.

ABE

Father?

BOWERS

Guilt, son. That is all. Guilt is not a sin. An outcome of sin... but only when warranted. Do not let this eat you alive, Abe. Let it go.

ABE

Father, I-

BOWERS

Abe!

Abe bows his head.

ABE

Yes, Father.

BOWERS

Let us pray...

I/E. CAR - HIGHWAY - AFTERNOON

The rolling countryside. The clock reads 5:36 PM. Abe drives the same church sedan Patrick picked him up in.

He speeds across an empty highway.

I/E. CAR - HIGHWAY - EVENING

The clock now reads 6:36.

The sun across the rolling plains sets through scattered rainclouds. Abe begins to slightly doze off behind the wheel. He tries to remain attentive, when...

Three large, wooden crosses, multiple stories high, appear on a hill in the near distance, silhouettes in the horizon.

A sign appears, following the crosses:

"WELCOME TO AXTELL, INDIANA! GOD BLESS & BUCKLE ON UP!"

EXT. MAIN STREET - AXTELL - EVENING

Axtell's "Main Street" looks of a town either timeless or lost in time. The shops, grocery stores, and pharmacies look like a lost set from Rod Sterling's "The Twilight Zone."

Abe immediately notices the oddest thing... the streets are entirely empty. Not a soul, either old or young, is in sight... and on a Friday afternoon.

Suddenly, Abe sees one lone body near a closed bank. It's a kid, no older than 12, standing alone. He uninvitingly stares directly at Abe as he passes by.

At the end of the street, just peeking over the town shops, we barely see the pointed roof of "Holy Trinity Church."

EXT. PARKING LOT - HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - EVENING

Abe turns into the church's parking lot. It's almost entirely full. He parks and exits for the church.

INT. LOBBY - HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - EVENING

Abe looks up and down the tall, polished walls of Holy Trinity's lobby. Gorgeous. It even competes with St. Mary's.

Two large, wooden doors to the main hall stand front of Abe. We can hear a muffled voice come from behind them.

MCKINLEY (O.S.)

(muffled)

You know, if you go to France- as I have -and go to the great Cathedral of Chartres- it's just about an hour south or so of Paris...

Abe cracks open the doors and enters quietly...

INT. MAIN HALL - HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Every row of benches sit full. Abe looks across the sea of heads: adult's, children's, even infant's. They look attentively to the front podium.

At the center of their gaze, behind a podium and fronting a beautiful, curtained, stained glass window, is the man of Abe's interest:

FATHER ARTHUR MCKINLEY (Mid-Late 50s), in the middle of a sermon:

MCKINLEY

There's a stained glass window that
you'll find. On its beauty
intertwines two stories:

(slight pause)

One, being that of the good
Samaritan- the one doing the work
of the Lord. The other, the story
of the fall and the redemption. Why
do you think that is?

The townsfolk are quiet. They don't speak, only listen.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

That's a genuine question, people.
Why do you think that is?

Pause.

The townsfolk murmur among themselves, almost nervously.

Abe leans on a wall in the back, attempting to remain hidden--

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

Father Aubry?

--unsuccessfully.

Every head in the church turns to Abe, almost in unison.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

Abraham Aubry... didn't think I'd
see you, did you? Welcome to
Axtell... Why do you think that is?

Abe freezes.

ABE

I'm sorry?

MCKINLEY

The two stories? Hung over the
window of Chartres. The Good
Samaritan and the fall and the
redemption. What do-

ABE

(interrupting)

It's a metaphor... I believe.

Abe sneaks a glance at the people. He grows nervous of them.

They only stare at Abe, all with plastic-looking, cracked
smiles. They don't even blink. Abe continues:

ABE (CONT'D)

The ideal specimen that god
created... meaning, ourselves.

Silence... Then McKinley claps in excitement of Abe.

MCKINLEY

Very good! Very, very good!!! Have
a seat, will you?

A handful of townsfolk make room for him on a nearby bench.
He sits as McKinley continues:

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

By reflection of the cathedral's
art, friends, one side wants us to
see what we are, and the other, is
what we should strive to be. In
actuality, I believe the collective
two is one in the same. We will
stumble. We will fall. But, as long
as we fight... fight... FIGHT to be
the Good Samaritan, we will redeem
as the Good Samaritan all along.
That is not two stories. That is
one. That is our story.

(beat)

A hand for Father Abraham, ladies
and gentlemen.

The townsfolk give Abe an abrupt standing ovation. Abe
awkwardly sits, unsure of the reaction.

McKinley continues over the applause:

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

May we bless his fight for the soul
of our own, young Maslow, and may
we bless him the utmost hospitality
that god can give. Thank you!

The crowd continues. Echoing out to...

I/E. CAR - EVENING

The clock now reads 7:30.

Abe tries to focus on the winding, neighborhood roads.

He can feel McKinley staring at him from the passenger seat.

McKinley, as calm as can be, looks Abe up and down with a grin on his face.

MCKINLEY

I'm a surprise to you, aren't I?

Abe doesn't know what to say. He pretends as if he didn't hear.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

I'm not the image that Father Bowers set in your head?

Abe still doesn't respond.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

Don't worry. I'm not offended. I wouldn't expect me either-

ABE

You're younger.

MCKINLEY

How's that?

ABE

You're a lot younger than I thought.

MCKINLEY

Funny, you're a lot older looking. Then again too much drink can suck any youth from a man's-

Abe's eyes dart at McKinley. He can't believe what he just said.

McKinley notices... he chuckles at Abe's stare.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

I read your file. Personal. legal. All of it... a Dickens novel, from Bowers. What, he didn't tell you?

Abe has nothing to say, only a grim look. McKinley smiles.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

...I mean no harm. Looks like Bowers set the wrong image for the both of us... don't you agree?

They sit in awkward silence, but McKinley still smiles.

Then...

ABE
He said you were one for
"traditional" beliefs...

MCKINLEY
Did he?

McKinley goes quiet. He smiles again and laughs to himself,
charmingly.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)
(chuckling)
Oh... brother...

He continues to laugh. Abe can't help but smile at McKinley's
jolliness.

EXT. MILLER HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The two approach the Miller's front door. McKinley leads.

MCKINLEY
Allow me.

He knocks.

The door swings open: Mary Anne Miller, once again. She grows
a tired smile at the sight of McKinley.

Abe notices the exhaustion in her eyes.

MARY ANNE
Father Mckinley! What a pleasant
surprise.

MCKINLEY
Evening, Mary Anne. I wanted to
introduce you to Father Aubry. He's
um... well, he's here for-

Abe extends his hand.

ABE
Evening, Mrs. Miller. I'm-

Suddenly, Mary Anne releases from the door and embraces Abe
with a surprising, strong hug.

Abe freezes, unsure how to react as she holds the hug.

She releases.

MARY ANNE
Excuse me. Forgive me, Father.

ABE
No. No, that's alright.

MARY ANNE
Come inside! Please.
(into the house)
Honey?

They enter the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MILLER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The living room looks just as cozy as we once saw it, now lit warmly by cute lamps for the evening.

Abe stands in the center of the room as McKinley looms by the door, watching him.

Abe holds a picture from a couch-side table. It's of a young boy, a toddler, looking cheery in a pair of little overalls. He runs to the camera in the photo with his arms out.

Abe smiles.

Marcus Miller appears over Abe's shoulder.

ABE
(showing Marcus)
Is this...?

MARCUS
Our little "Mas." It was a picnic for our neighbor's commencement.

ABE
Beautiful boy. You call him "Mas?"

MARCUS
Just as his sister, Melanie, is "Mel." Mary Anne, "Mary."

Speaking of which, Mary Anne, in the kitchen, calls out to their daughter:

MARY ANNE
Mel?

ABE
(to Marcus)
And you, "Mark?"

MARCUS
At your service, sir- I mean
Father. Forgive me.

Abe chuckles at Marcus' corniness. Then...

MCKINLEY
Marcus? A word?

Marcus springs to McKinley's call.

MARCUS
Of course, Father!
(to Abe)
Excuse me.

Marcus leaves Abe's side. Abe watches. McKinley and Marcus remove themselves to the other side of the room. They whisper to each other.

MARY ANNE
Mel, come out here please!

Mary Anne interrupts Abe's gaze with a glass of tea:

MARY ANNE (CONT'D)
Ice Tea, Father?

ABE
I'm sorry?
(re: the tea)
Oh, no. I'm okay. That's kind of
you.

Abe tries to politely sneak glances at McKinley and Marcus talking. Mary Anne continues:

MARY ANNE
Are you sure? Father McKinley
insisted to us to be as gracious of
hosts as-

ABE
I'd actually like to see him. If
you wouldn't mind.

MARY ANNE
Who?

Abe gives her a puzzled look: "What do you mean, 'Who?'"

Mary Anne realizes. She sneaks a look at McKinley talking to Marcus. Abe notices.

Her smile looks more nervous now, more tacked on. She looks back at Abe. She remains polite.

MARY ANNE (CONT'D)

Oh... of course.

Her smile cracks. A lone bead of sweat runs down the side of her face, but Abe leaves it alone. Maslow is his priority.

INT. HALLWAY - MILLER HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The bedroom is cloaked in darkness, darker than we had seen it the night of the storm.

Abe closes the door behind him, softly.

The walls are all bare, but now covered in protective padding. The bed is the same.

Maslow lies asleep in bed, covered by a thin sheet and wearing a sweaty pair of colorful pajamas.

Abe quietly approaches the bed and removes from his coat: A bible and a rather small set of rosary beads.

Abe removes his coat and wipes sweat from his forehead. He looks at it on his hand. The room is unbelievably hot. He cracks open the window over the bed.

He sits in a cheap, plastic chair to the side of Maslow's bed. He holds the rosaries close to his face, then:

ABE

(whispering)

In the name of the father, the son,
and the holy spirit...

He kisses the beads and places them close to Maslow's head.

The boy doesn't move to the presence of the beads. He's sound asleep, looking peaceful in the darkness.

Abe notices a bedside lamp. He switches it on, revealing...

Scratches, cuts, bruises, and sweat covering Maslow's face. His lips are overly chapped, covered in dry blood.

ABE (CONT'D)

Oh, god...

Abe reaches and feels his hand on Maslow's forehead. He stops himself, distracted by a large scar going down the boy's neck. It continues under his pajamas.

Abe delicately removes the thin sheet off of Maslow. The pajama shirt is already torn to shreds from the outside.

Abe unbuttons it, revealing more scars, welts, and bruises all over the child's body. Some of the scars resemble upside-down crosses. Abe feels one... they're real.

He notices something at Maslow's hand, something cold and metallic...

Handcuffs, restraining the boy to the bed, covered in small splotches of dry blood from Maslow's struggle.

Abe sharply returns Maslow's sheet over his body.

Abe stands and sighs, grabbing his bible and coat to leave. He strings the rosary beads on a nearby bed post.

He moves to turn off the bedside lamp, when--

Revealed by Abe's body, we now see the eyes of young Maslow--wide open and looking right at Abe. He's quiet...

Abe notices the boy's eyes: wide, bloodshot, and not blinking at all. They stab into him.

Abe stops in his tracks. His heart skips a beat at the sight.

He collects himself and looks back into Maslow's stare with gentle eyes.

ABE (CONT'D)

(soft)

Hello.

No response. Maslow remains idle and stares, still not blinking.

ABE (CONT'D)

Are you not going to greet me back?

Still nothing. Just silence.

ABE (CONT'D)

Am I speaking to Maslow Miller?

Still, to Abe's surprise, nothing. Maslow only stares. It goes on for too long, making Abe uncomfortable.

The boy's stares bring something to Abe's mind...

FLASH CUT: Less than a second. Ruth's stare... his dream.

Abe's calm, gentleness turns to fear.

ABE (CONT'D)

...Ruth?

Suddenly a voice calls from outside, breaking Maslow and Abe's trance:

MCKINLEY (O.S.)

Father Aubry?

Abe looks to the door and then back to Maslow.

His eyes are now shut, but he slightly smirks in his sleep.

Abe turns off the lamp and slowly backs out of the room.

INT. HALLWAY - MILLER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Abe closes the door behind him. He lets out a weighted sigh and looks up--

--ANOTHER FACE SUDDENLY COMES INTO VIEW.

The face of a girl appears through the crack of a door, silently looking Abe up and down. Abe jumps at the sight of her: Melanie.

ABE

(winded)

Hi- hello...

She doesn't say anything either.

ABE (CONT'D)

I'm Father Aubry, you can call me-

McKinley calls again:

MCKINLEY (V.O.)

Abraham?

Abe looks to the call, then back to Melanie--

She's gone...

INT. LIVING ROOM - MILLER HOUSE - SECONDS LATER

Abe re-enters the living room.

McKinley stands waiting as Mary Anne & Marcus oddly hide behind him.

ABE

Yes?

MCKINLEY

You went into the bedroom?

ABE

Yes.

MCKINLEY

You saw him? The boy. Why?

Abe pauses, confused by the question. He opens his mouth to speak, when--

MARY ANNE

Will you be starting tonight,
Father?!

McKinley sneaks a glance at Mary Anne's interruption.

MARY ANNE (CONT'D)

Forgive me, Father.

Abe thinks she's talking to him.

ABE

That's okay... Um- no. Not this evening. I have a few more tests to run prior to the-

MCKINLEY

Tests?

ABE

Just a formality. Caution's always best...

(beat)

What? Bowers didn't tell you...?

McKinley doesn't respond. Abe moves on:

ABE (CONT'D)

I just wanted to meet him. I actually met someone else back there- scared the life out of me-

MARCUS

That's just Mel. Don't mind her, she likes to linger about.

MARY ANNE

Will you be joining us tonight?

McKinley shoots Mary Anne another look. She doesn't notice.

ABE

For what?

MARY ANNE

The church dinner this evening?

ABE

I wasn't aware that--

MCKINLEY

That would most certainly be my fault. Just a small gathering me and the other folks put on for the Millers. We bring food, read sermons- anything to help the boy's fight. You've had a long day of travel, and I didn't want you-

ABE

I'd love to come by...

Pause. McKinley then cracks an unnerving smile.

MCKINLEY

Splendid. 10 o'clock?

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Abe slings his bag over his shoulder, approaching a small, two-story motel (no better than a Super 8).

We push in as he approaches, like the POV of something watching him. He stops, then glances over his shoulder. He chuckles to himself, seeing...

BOWERS (PRE-LAP)

Good to know you have your eye on him, at least...

INT. SUITE - MOTEL - NIGHT

Holy Trinity Church, right across the street and well within view from Abe's motel-room window.

The room is small and dimly lit.

ABE

Yeah...

Abe smirks, gazing at the well lit cathedral in the night. He's on his cell phone with Father Bowers.

ABE (CONT'D)

On "him."

Abe chuckles it off. He looks down to a bedside table where a nice bottle of brandy, with a bow tied on, sits.

A card sits in front of the drinks. Abe reads:

"Many Blessings and thanks to what you do. A nice welcome gift from Axtell to you."

Abe flips the card:

"- McKinley"

Abe sighs. He cracks open the bottle...

INT. OFFICE - ST. MARY'S CHURCH - INTERCUT

Bowers lays back in his office chair. A lone desk lamp lights the room as Bowers smokes another cigarette.

BOWERS

He's a charismatic one, I told you.

ABE

I think people often confuse
"charisma" with abrasiveness...

Abe unpacks his clothes and to-go kit for exorcisms. He spreads them out on the bed (holy water, bible, stole, etc.).

A glass of brandy is now in his hand.

He removes something from his pocket. The bar napkin from earlier:

"Help for the helpers, give me a ring anytime..."

The note and phone number from Richie. Abe smiles.

BOWERS

And the boy?

Abe sets the napkin on his desk and sips his drink. He coughs at its burn. He looks at the brandy... "a bit strong."

ABE

(coughing)

Scarred Lacerations. Bruises.

(MORE)

ABE (CONT'D)

Unaware if self-inflicted. Sweating
at the head, but...

Abe stops. He realizes something.

BOWERS

Abe?

ABE

I didn't bring my thermometer... I
forgot to take his temperature.
But, I have more tests to run.

Abe unpacks an old tape recorder from his suitcase. He sets
it on a small desk, right by his laptop.

BOWERS

Did he say anything?

Abe sips again.

ABE

No. He was asleep for the most
part.

BOWERS

Are you sure?

Beat. Abe stops, mid-another sip of brandy.

He remembers...

FLASH CUT: Maslow's stare at Abe from the bedroom.

Suddenly, Abe's tape recorder comes to life with a *CLICK*,
CLICK, *CLICK*. It snaps Abe back to reality. He coughs.

ABE

(coughing)

I'll call you tomorrow when I know
more. Goodnight, Father.

He hangs up. All alone now...

LATER:

The clock at his bedside table reads 9:26.

Abe hunches over his desk, testing his tape recorder. He
clicks record and speaks into a mic.

ABE

unum, duo, tres, quattuor...

He clicks stop and plays it back.

ABE (RECORDING) (CONT'D)
"unum, duo, tres, quattuor..."

Abe opens his near laptop. The tabs from the airport bar remain, including the paused clip from "The Exorcist."

It plays automatically as soon as the screen illuminates.

ABE (CONT'D)
 (startled)
 Jeez!

He pauses it. The frame holds on the iconic, scarred face of Reagan. Abe takes a moment, examining the face.

Abe yawns and wipes his eyes as he looks. He closes the tab.

Abe clicks to his emails where a notification pops on the screen. The subject line is left empty.

The sender's name reads: **philly268@gmail.com**

Abe clicks on it, with another cough:

"If you're smart, you'll leave. If you're brave, you'll help him.

Just don't help them.

Go to the dinner tonight. You'll see."

No signature is left under. Abe replies:

"Who is this?"

He sends it, followed by another strong yawn, interrupted by a cough. He looks back at his bedside clock. It reads: 9:29.

ABE (CONT'D)
 10 o'clock...

Abe grabs his phone and sets an alarm for 30 minutes.

He lies flat on the bed, fully clothed, and tries resting his eyes. Then...

I/E. VOID - ABE'S DREAM

Abe snaps his eye's open. He's standing, as if he'd been sleepwalking.

He stops at the sound. He feels his throat.

Abe stands, but no longer in the void.

It's Maslow's bedroom, just as he saw it an hour earlier.

He looks around the room, the bed catches his eye...

Maslow stares at Abe once more, startling him. The boy's eyes truly pierce him, the silence only making it sharper.

Abe tries closing his eyes, thinking it would end the dream. He opens them...

Now in Maslow's spot, under the covers, but sitting upright, is Ruth. Abe jumps back.

ABE (CONT'D)

NO-!

INT. SUITE - MOTEL - DAY

ABE JOLTS AWAKE-- almost launching himself off the bed.

He gasps for breath, his heart is racing.

Abe fights to collect his breath as he looks about the room... his dream has ended and his phone's alarm continues to ring in his ear.

A beam of morning sunlight peaks through the curtains and right onto his face. He covers himself from the light.

Abe tries to lift himself from bed, underestimating his grogginess.

Sitting up, he feels his pounding head... think the worst hangover, and only from one drink.

He stops his phone's alarm, when--

--**HONK**

The sound of a truck comes from right outside his window. Abe stands and moves to see...

Across the way, a large transport truck parks just out front of Holy Trinity Church. A large stack of 2x4s floods out from the back.

A group of townsfolk hand stacks by the load to carry inside. Handing them off from the cargo bay: Father McKinley.

EXT. PARKING LOT - HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - DAY

McKinley helps a trio of men lift a larger stack of planks off the truck.

MCKINLEY

Ready, men? Three... two...

--they heave it up.

Abe approaches from across the street.

ABE

Father McKinley.

McKinley relieves it from his shoulders as the other men carry it off to the church.

MCKINLEY

(to the men)

Thank you, gentlemen.

(to Abe)

Abraham! Good morning!

ABE

Need a hand?

MCKINLEY

Oh, no bother. Me and the gents could lift the whole truck at once if we willed it.

ABE

What's the occasion?

MCKINLEY

Upcoming renovation. No sense in the expense for a moving company when it all goes to the wood.

(he chuckles)

What happened last night? The Millers missed you dearly.

A stocky man, wearing a police uniform lost from the 80s, exits the church's front doors.

ABE

I wanted to apologize for that. I tried resting my eyes, set an alarm but-

MCKINLEY

(interrupting)

Oh! Hey!

(MORE)

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

(to Herald)

Willy! Get over here.

He does, immediately extending his hand in Abe's face.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

Abraham, this is Wilson Herald,
town's Sheriff.

They shake, awkwardly.

ABE

Pleasure.

WILSON

Likewise.

(to McKinley)

Father, ETA on our visit to the
Miller house?

Abe cocks his head to attention. McKinley notices.

MCKINLEY

(covering)

Why don't you hold that thought,
Willy. I'll meet you inside, yeah?

WILSON

Yes, Father.

Wilson excuses himself. McKinley waits until he's farther
away.

MCKINLEY

Good man. I asked him to come with
us today. See that there's no harm
to you... right?

ABE

Father I don't know if that's
necessary. The procedure isn't that
dramatic-

Suddenly a pile of wood falls from the truck. A group of
townsfolk try to catch it.

MCKINLEY

Excuse me!

McKinley runs to help.

Wilson calls back just as he re-enters the church.

WILSON
(to Abe)
I'll be seeing you, Father!

Abe waves at him in response, not even able to fake a smile.

Abe watches Wilson disappear as we begin hearing...

--CLICKING, SCRATCHING, & METAL SMACKS ONTO WOOD--

INT. MASLOW'S ROOM - DAY

Handcuffs strapped to Maslow's bed smack back and forth into the bed frame. The boy, awake, struggles with his restraints.

Maslow growls and moves like a rabid dog trying to get loose.

The bruises and scabs at his wrists begin to redden and crack with bits of fresh blood.

Abe's rosary beads, still on the bed post, move with the shaking bed.

INT. HALLWAY - MILLER HOUSE - DAY

We push in on the outside of Maslow's doors, hearing the noises from what we've already seen.

A hand slowly pushes the door open, revealing we're in a POV. We see Maslow's entire mangled body in the bed.

Maslow stops his struggle as he sees his guests entering.

INT. MASLOW'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Abe and McKinley enter the room. Sheriff Herald follows in behind them. He places himself in the back corner of the room.

ABE
(to Maslow)
Good morning.

Abe and McKinley stand at the foot of the bed. They gesture the holy cross on their chests.

ABE (CONT'D)
(muttering)
In the name of the father, the son,
and the-

MASLOW
Stop that...

Abe does. McKinley does not.

Abe shoots up at the sound of the boy's voice. It's low and raspy. Think an aged, pack-a-day smoker with a bad cold.

ABE
You're much more vocal since we
last met.

MASLOW
I SAID STOP THAT, GOD DAMMIT!

Abe remains very calm and confident with the child. Oddly more charismatic and playful than he is with everyday, non-possessed people.

ABE
Stop what?

Abe smiles. He examines Maslow's cut up face, now in motion.

ABE (CONT'D)
You know, your face is much kinder
when you sleep.

Maslow holds a nasty scowl. No words for Abe.

ABE (CONT'D)
Am I speaking with Maslow Miller?

MASLOW
Fuck you...

ABE
You sure?

Maslow growls at him.

ABE (CONT'D)
I'd think a demon would be more
certain than that... so, where is
Maslow Miller?

Maslow says nothing.

ABE (CONT'D)
Your silence... are you trying to
taunt or mislead me?

MASLOW
They say you'd hurt me.

ABE
Who's "they?"

MASLOW
The devil! He and his children.

ABE
Well... then "they" say a lot,
don't they? I should be flattered.

Abe takes a step closer to Maslow at his bedside.

ABE (CONT'D)
What else do they say about me?

Maslow shuffles back, hiding a hint of fear towards Abe. He still holds his scowl and growl.

ABE (CONT'D)
Are you afraid of me, Maslow?

MASLOW
DON'T FUCKIN CALL ME THAT!!!

Maslow spits right into Abe's face.

Sheriff Herald tries to react. McKinley beats him to it:

McKinley furiously launches to the other side of Maslow, then--
--SMACK! MCKINLEY BACKHANDS THE BOY IN THE FACE!!!

MCKINLEY
HOW DARE YOU?! FOWL, REVOLTING
DEMON--!!!

ABE
FATHER!

MCKINLEY
(to Maslow)
God will have his judgement with
you. He hath come with the fury to
SMITE, in the name of-!

ABE
MCKINLEY!

McKinley stops. His eyes snap to Abe, wild-like.

Abe is stunned by McKinley, seeing a completely different man from the last 12 hours... what the hell is even saying??

ABE (CONT'D)
Step back, Father. These are just
distractions, do not submit.

McKinley steps back.

Maslow lets out a disturbing cry at McKinley. It's hard to
tell whether it's a laugh or cry.

MASLOW
They say lots about everyone...

ABE
Can I speak with them?

MASLOW
No.

ABE
Why not?

MASLOW
Only me...

ABE
Then who are you? You already said
you're not Mas-

MCKINLEY
A DEMON! Lucifer, the light-bringer
himself come to-

MASLOW
FUCK YOU!!!!

ABE
Father! One more word and I'll ask
you to leave.

McKinley's wild eyes have not settled.

Maslow locks his eyes on McKinley, stalking his prey. He
growls at the priest.

McKinley stares wildly at the boy as well. He does not back
down.

Silence. Abe watches their stand off with each other...

ABE (CONT'D)
Demon?

Maslow doesn't respond. He continues to scowl at McKinley.

ABE (CONT'D)

Demon.

Still nothing.

ABE (CONT'D)

Maslow.

Even with that, the boy does not break his lock on McKinley. Neither does McKinley on him. Abe sighs... that's enough.

Abe approaches McKinley.

ABE (CONT'D)

(to McKinley)

Take a break, Father.

MCKINLEY

I'm fine, I'm sorry-

ABE

Father. Take a break, then come back in 5 minutes. Please.

Pause.

McKinley breaks his stare with Maslow and now looks to Abe. His wild eyes simmer. He looks to Sheriff Herald, still in the corner with his hand near his holster. McKinley nods to him.

They leave, closing the door behind them.

Abe turns back to Maslow, now staring at only him.

He reaches into a bag slung over his shoulders and pulls out his old tape recorder. He places it on a nearby table.

ABE (CONT'D)

Now... where were we?

INT. LIVING ROOM - MILLER HOUSE - DAY

CLICK--

Abe presses down on the record button, now sitting in front of the living room couch. The recorder's flimsy, old tapes begin to slowly wind and turn.

MARCUS

What is that for?

Marcus and Mary Anne sit huddled together on the couch. Abe sits in a chair opposite of them.

ABE

Testimony of the involved parties.

McKinley cuts in from the back corner of the room. Sheriff Herald lingers with him.

MCKINLEY

Abraham, church approval already accounted-

ABE

I merely wish to know all that has happened prior to today... You give me enough info, you give me enough to find a worthy weakness and help your son... Understand?

Slight pause, then...

They both nod. McKinley retreats.

ABE (CONT'D)

Mary Anne?

MARY ANNE

(nervous)

I'm sorry, Father. I don't know where to-

ABE

Anything to your best recollection is fine.

Mary Anne gulps, she's sweating again.

MARY ANNE

...it began with the bruises. He was shivering, too. All the time.

ABE

You ever check for a fever?

MARY ANNE

Um- no. No, we lost our thermometer months ago.

ABE

Where would the bruises usually be.

MARY ANNE

His wrists? Sometimes his stomach-

MARCUS

We thought he'd been getting into fights at school.

McKinley steps in again.

MCKINLEY

Boys have been prone to roughhouse in front the church every so often. Sunday morning brawls, isn't that right, Willy?

WILSON

Yes, Father.

Abe turns back to Mary, ignoring McKinley.

ABE

Does he have many friends?

MARY ANNE

Of course...

ABE

Can you name them?

Abe begins to write them down on his legal pad. We closely see each one penciled down.

MARCUS

Thomas Jakob he saw often. He's older. Used to go steady with Mel... Willy's boy, Oke. The Hooker boys- Jack, John, Joey.

INT. MASLOW'S ROOM - DAY

Abe paces back and forth at the foot of Maslow's bed.

Maslow never stops watching him.

MASLOW

Maslow is one of many friends, isn't he?

MASLOW (CONT'D)

No...

ABE

Thomas Jakob?

MASLOW

No.

ABE
Oke Wilson?

MASLOW
No!

ABE
The Hooker boys: Joey, Jack, John-

MASLOW
THEY BELONG IN HELL WITH ME! FUCK
YOU!

ABE
Why's that?

Maslow doesn't respond.

ABE (CONT'D)
Did they make you look like this?

Maslow only growls.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MILLER HOUSE - DAY

McKinley paces behind Abe, still sitting. Abe tries his hardest to ignore him.

ABE
He's mentioned "they" very often.
Do you have any idea of who he may
be referring to?

MARCUS
That's a bit obvious, Father, isn't
it?

ABE
Then let me rephrase. When did
"they" show up?

Mary Anne, still shaking of fear, speaks up:

MARY ANNE
Two months ago, maybe more. We
thought they were just bad dreams,
so we'd told him to pray every
night. Stop them from happening-

MARCUS
They happened mid-day soon after.

Abe writes all this down along-side his recorder. He sees a sudden figure in the corner of his eye...

Melanie peaks around the corner of the hall. Abe only catches her eyes on him before she ducks away quickly.

ABE
(to Mary Anne)
Then what?

MARY ANNE
They became more...

ABE
What?

MARY ANNE
Aggressive.

MCKINLEY
(intruding)
Yes...

Abe looks back at McKinley, annoyed. He then glances to where Melanie was. She's still gone.

ABE
(to Marcus)
How do you mean?

Marcus glances at Mary Anne. She looks as if she could cry.

MARCUS
They told him to do things...

INT. MASLOW'S ROOM - DAY

Abe sits at Maslow's bed side.

ABE
What did you make him do to Mary Anne?

Maslow gives him an evil smile.

MASLOW
You wouldn't like to hear it, Father...

INT. LIVING ROOM - MILLER HOUSE - DAY

Mary Anne slowly rolls up her shirt sleeve. An enormous scar, a bite mark with a chunk of muscle missing, sits below her shoulder. It's only just healed.

MARY ANNE

It was Friday mass. I was trying to get him out the car and into the Church... so...

MCKINLEY

They called me.

INT. MASLOW'S ROOM - DAY

Abe bravely leans closer to Maslow.

Maslow remains idle in bed.

ABE

Making a boy attack- defile his own mother. That's foul even for Satan, himself.

MASLOW

No it isn't... Stopped the bitch from hurting.

ABE

From bringing you to mass?

MASLOW

Yes.

ABE

Doesn't sound too bad. Why do it?

MASLOW

Had to...

INT. LIVING ROOM - MILLER HOUSE - DAY

ABE

(to Marcus)

Has he ever spoken in different languages?

MARCUS

I beg your pardon?

ABE
 Different languages: French?
 German? Arabic? ...Latin?

MARCUS
 I... um-

INT. MASLOW'S ROOM - DAY

Abe stands from the bed. He paces again.

ABE
 Speak latin to me.

MASLOW
 No.

ABE
 I'd like to hear it. You don't wish
 to impress me?

MASLOW
 I want you to leave us alone, you
 son of bitch!

ABE
 Perhaps one of your "us's" could do
 it for you. Doesn't have to be
 Latin... French?

Silence. Maslow only scowls.

ABE (CONT'D)
 You don't know any, do you?

INT. LIVING ROOM - MILLER HOUSE - DAY

Marcus catches an eye from McKinley. Abe misses it, writing
 in his legal pad.

MARCUS
 Yes. I've heard him.

ABE
 Are you sure-?

MARY ANNE
 He is.

Abe looks at her. Then at Marcus. Then at McKinley and
 Sheriff Herald.

He nods.

ABE
Okay... I think that's enough for
today.

He looks back at McKinley. McKinley nods to him with a grin.

Abe stands.

ABE (CONT'D)
If you'll excuse me for a moment.

EXT. MILLER HOUSE - DAY

Abe exits to the front porch, separating himself from the house, and McKinley. He looks to see if anyone on the street sees him...

Nothing. He sighs.

Abe then pulls his flask from his pockets. Ashamed of himself, he cracks it open and goes for a swig, when...

MELANIE
Why do you use a tape recorder?

Abe jumps at Mel's voice. He hides his flask back in his pocket, spilling a little on himself.

She sits in an open window sill. She's been there the whole time.

ABE
Hello to you too... Melanie. I'd
introduce myself, but I'm afraid
I've already-

MELANIE
Why do you use a tape recorder? You
have a phone.

ABE
Why would you like to know?

She shrugs, waiting for an answer.

ABE (CONT'D)
A tape recorder's age lowers risk
of tampering. If I hear anything in
a recording that sounds... "off,"
I'll know it's not fake.

MELANIE

If a spawn of hell has enough power to tamper with a phone, wouldn't a tape recorder make no difference?

Abe smiles. He appreciates her clever cynicism.

ABE

It's not the "spawns" I worry about.

Melanie doesn't smile back, she's rather suspicious of Abe.

ABE (CONT'D)

You okay? You haven't had much to say about-

MELANIE

What're the symptoms of my brother?

Abe hesitates, thrown off by her abruptness.

ABE

I'm sorry?

MELANIE

Of someone...

ABE

Possessed?

She nods.

ABE (CONT'D)

Okay...

(he sighs)

It starts with low temperatures. Dark presence feeds off any of earth's coldness. Bruises and welts on the body. Change in voice and behavior, animalistic more than human. Sudden ability to speak other languages, typically Latin... body contortions under restraint. Shivering and coldness at the skin. Kind of like a fever, but no rise in actual body temperature.

MELANIE

Did my brother have one?

ABE

A fever? I wouldn't think so, but
your mother said she'd lost the
thermometer.

Melanie twitches at that. Abe notices, when...

--HONK--

A car from across the road honks at Abe and Melanie.

Abe turns to see a group of overly jolly neighbors passing in
a mini-van.

NEIGHBORS

WELCOME, FATHER AUBRY!!!

Abe awkwardly waves with a fake smile. They pass.

Abe tries to turn back to Melanie, but--

ABE

Melanie, if there's something you
want to tell me, you can--

--She's gone... again. Disappeared from the window.

Abe watches where she once was and sighs, when...

MCKINLEY

Abraham..?

Abe looks to the sound of his voice. He lingers on the porch.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

Dinner?

INT. DINING ROOM - MILLER HOUSE - EVENING

A platter of salmon sits center of the Miller's dinner table.
A bowl of salad, pierogis, and two bottles of red wine on
each side of the main dish.

Abe, McKinley, Marcus, Mary Anne, and- now in plain sight -
Melanie, sit around the feast.

McKinley's at the head of the table.

They're already mid-meal. McKinley sips on a glass of wine as
Abe listens to Marcus ramble on a story, a smile on his face.

Marcus is truly giving it his "dad all..."

MARCUS

SO! I walk through our front door, full, specially vintage trombone in my arms- still in the case. Down the front hall, my BEAMING ray of sunshine, "Mary Anne." Staring at me. Couldn't really make out her face, but at her side... Two, tiny pink suitcases. I think: "Marcus, by god, what have you done?!" I could've let the toilet seat up, I could've killed our non-existing dog, I could've broken all my own teeth- wouldn't have known. I look at her, and before I can utter a sound, she charges me like a man from the NCAA--

Mary Anne, embarrassed, steps in. Abe chuckles from their story.

MARY ANNE

I did not "charge!" I was going to the car-!

MARCUS

She's running, baby bump be warned, raising hell. Screaming: HALL YOUR TINY--

(he mouths)

--ASS--

(to McKinley)

Forgive me, Father.

McKinley smiles and sips his wine.

MCKINLEY

Forgiven.

MARCUS

She grabs me. Hauls me to the car. Guess where my precious trombone is?

Abe sips his wine, but almost spits up from Marcus' abrupt question.

ABE

Where?

MARY ANNE

You can stop the story now.

MARCUS
Spiraled right into where our old
mailbox used to be.

Abe and McKinley laugh.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
I swear, she has twins and she's
punting the Fed-Ex guy.

More laughing.

MARY ANNE
Buuuuuuut he's missing the point of
the story. This was the day, in
sacrifice of our mailbox, we were
blessed with our little Melanie.

Mary Anne places a hand on Mel's back. Mel only stares at her
plate.

She speaks:

MELANIE
No it wasn't...

Beat.

Abe perks up at her voice.

MARY ANNE
(jolly)
What?! What're you talking about?

MELANIE
That wasn't my-

MARCUS
(snapping)
Mel.

Melanie stops from Marcus' sudden snap. McKinley only
watches, looking as if he's enjoying it.

Pause. The silence is unbearable, until...

ABE
(to Marcus)
So, you play?

MARCUS
I did. Taught high school band back
in Indianapolis. 8 years.
(MORE)

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Worked for the church since our
move here. Before Maslow was born.

McKinley finishes a sip of wine.

MCKINLEY

Abe is from the city as well.

MARY ANNE

We thought you were from Boston.

ABE

I am. I left Indianapolis for
college when I was 19. Hadn't been
back since.

MARY ANNE

Not to visit your family?

Abe tries to be polite:

ABE

It was... complicated.

The table waits for him to explain. Abe gives in from the
pressure:

ABE (CONT'D)

It was hard to. My, um... my little
sister had passed away.

Mary Anne gives a slight gasps.

MARY ANNE

I'm so sorry. That's awful...

ABE

It's alright.

McKinley looks more interested than sympathetic.

MCKINLEY

How'd she die?

Abe hesitates. Slightly offended by the question.

ABE

(to McKinley)
Complicated.

MARCUS

What was her name?

ABE

Ruth. Ruth Aubry.

McKinley smirks and grabs his wine glass.

MCKINLEY

Well...

He raises the glass. Marcus and Mary Anne follow.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

To Ruth.

MARCUS AND MARY ANNE

To Ruth!

Abe raises his glass, unsettled by McKinley's stare at him.

ABE

To Ruth.

He fakes another smile at the cheers, when--

STOMP.... STOMP.... STOMP... STOMP...

The sound of heavy feet pounds louder and louder towards the dining room. Abe lifts his head, the first of the table to hear it coming.

INT. HALLWAY - MILLER HOUSE - SAME

We see blood dripping from the tip of a small finger, guiding a small trail down the hall...

INT. DINING ROOM - MILLER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

...then through the living room and stopping just outside the dining room.

The jolliness of the table vanishes.

They all snap their attention in the direction of the blood. Abe and McKinley stand, almost in unison.

We pull out, revealing not only a bloody finger, but a blood coated hand. Above that, a bruised, bloody wrist with skin torn and peeled. Stretched to its capacity. As if someone pulled tight shackles off their raw skin. We see him:

Maslow...

He stands shakily (he hasn't been off his bed for weeks) in his torn, sweaty, and now bloody pajamas. He doesn't move at first. Watching the table.

Melanie stands.

MELANIE

Mas-!

Marcus grabs and holds her back.

His bloodshot eyes move to each member of the table: McKinley, then to Abe, then to Marcus, then to Melanie, then, finally... Mary Anne.

His mouth foams. His usual growls build worse than before.

Abe sees the boy's bloody, but freed, wrists. Gruesome...

ABE

(to himself)

Oh, god...

Abe tries to move towards him. He gently lifts his hand.

He notices something in Maslow's other hand. The rosary beads, gripped tightly and now covered in blood.

ABE (CONT'D)

Maslow? Hear me-

It's too late, the beads snap in the boy's grip--

--MASLOW CHARGES AT MARY ANNE SCREAMING!!!!

MASLOW

GAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!

Marcus hops in the way of his wife and pushes Melanie back.

Maslow leaps on top of the table, clawing to tear at his mother.

Abe intercepts him, tackling and pinning the boy to the table. McKinley runs to help Abe.

Maslow struggles, but still directs his screams to Mary Anne.

MASLOW (CONT'D)

YOU BITCH!!!!

Mary Anne screams, bursting into tears behind Marcus.

MASLOW (CONT'D)
 YOU DID THIS, YOU BITCH!!!! HOW
 COULD YOU!!!!!! YOU LIAR!!!

Abe pins the boys head down to the table.

ABE
 MASLOW, THAT'S ENOUGH!

Maslow screams, furious with Abe. He grabs a dish to his side and--

CRASH

--breaks it right over Abe's face. Abe falls back, losing his hold on Maslow.

McKinley tries to strengthen his grip. Maslow kicks him in the head. McKinley, disoriented, releases the boy.

Maslow slips a large cutting knife from the center dish. He stands on the table.

MELANIE
 MASLOW, STOP!!!

Abe regains himself. He sees the knife.

ABE
 NO!

Abe launches himself at Maslow again, when--

MCKINLEY- BACK ON HIS FEET -SACKS MASLOW, PINNING HIS HAND WITH THE KNIFE.

Maslow's screams and growling sound painful to the ear.

Marcus holds the rest of his family. Mary Anne is sobbing, while Mel struggles with her father's restraint.

McKinley begins to struggle with the boy's miraculous strength.

MCKINLEY
 ABE?!

ABE
 HOLD HIM!

Abe runs to his bag in the living room.

Maslow turns his head and spits in McKinley's face.

MASLOW
GO TO HELL, YOU FUCK!!!

McKinley's eyes grow wild again.

He punches Maslow across the face. Maslow smiles at it. Blood trickles from his mouth.

McKinley grabs a bowl to his side, raising it to crack into Maslow's skull.

MCKINLEY
(growling)
In the name of the father--

McKinley goes for the swing, and...

ABE KNOCKS MCKINLEY OFF MASLOW! He sticks a needle into the boy's leg- a tranquilizer.

Maslow's growls begin to loosen. He calms down. Eyes beginning to roll to the back of his skull until he's completely unconscious.

The boy's body goes limp. Abe lets him go.

The whole room breathes. They're still, frozen from shock...

EXT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

Wilson stands before McKinley in the Miller's front yard. His head hangs with shame.

WILSON
It won't happen again, Father...

McKinley nods.

Abe enters from the hallway, having returned Maslow to bed.

Wilson breaks away from McKinley upon Abe's entrance.

MCKINLEY
(to Abe)
He's restrained?

ABE
Should be out for the next few hours. I bandaged and cleaned his hands. Padded his restraints. Mary's down too, I gave her something for the shock...

Abe moves for his bag. He packs his tape recorder. McKinley's face mulls over something. He can't hold it in...

MCKINLEY

Is this enough for you, Abraham?

Abe stops. He turns to Mckinley.

ABE

I'm sorry?

MCKINLEY

This enough of a test for you?

ABE

That wasn't a test, Father. That was a travesty. And thank god it wasn't much worse-

MCKINLEY

Exactly! That's exactly my point! Time's of the essence and we fill it for what..? "Tests."

ABE

It's cautioning any measures of safety. That's routine.

MCKINLEY

Cautioning on behalf of a demon?

ABE

Time always tells if an innocent could get hurt, Father.

MCKINLEY

And it spoke sermons tonight! Wouldn't you agree?!

ABE

I agree to helping that boy and permitting his safety. And though I appreciate your digression and your patience, I don't agree with blind, impulsive action that thought it'd be heroic to bash his head in with a bowl. Wouldn't you agree?

McKinley backs down, caught in the act...

ABE (CONT'D)

You think I didn't see that?

Beat. Then...

ABE (CONT'D)

Do you have a problem with me,
Father...?

McKinley simmers. He's embarrassed... He breathes.

MCKINLEY

No. No, I apologize, Abe- Abe,
forgive me. I'm still just... I'm
sorry.

(moving on)

We begin to tomorrow? The exorcism?

Abe looks McKinley up and down. He lets it go.

ABE

...yes. No dinner tonight?

MCKINLEY

The one is plenty.

Abe smirks.

ABE

Right.

Abe slings his bag over his shoulder and moves to leave the house.

MCKINLEY

One more thing...

He hands something to Abe. The remains of his rosary beads,
now in pieces and doused with dry blood.

ABE

Thank you. Goodnight, Father.

He moves to the door again. Just before he reaches it, he
notices something down the hall:

Melanie. She creeps quietly out from Maslow's room and into
her own, not noticing Abe watching her.

INT. ROOM - MOTEL - NIGHT

The top of Abe's brandy bottle pops clean off. He pours
himself yet another glass.

He downs the drink in one gulp. He sighs with a slight cough
from the drink. He looks at the glass: "wow..." he thinks.

He pours another glass to sip on.

MOMENTS LATER

His emails are opened once again. A notification enters his inbox, but he doesn't notice it.

Sounds from his time with Maslow plays from his recorder:

ABE (RECORDING)
"What did you make him do to Mary Anne?"

MASLOW (RECORDING)
"You wouldn't like to hear it, Father..."

He winds it forward, sipping on his drink.

ABE (RECORDING)
"Making a boy attack his defile his own mother. That's foul even for Satan, himself."

Abe coughs from the drink.

MASLOW (RECORDING)
"No it isn't... Stopped the bitch from hurting. She's a liar!!!"

He stops the tape and sighs.

Behind Abe we see, through the window, the lights of Holy Trinity suddenly illuminate in the night. Abe doesn't notice it.

Instead... he sees the notification in his inbox. He clicks on it and coughs again from the drink.

The email, once again from **philly268@gmail.com**:

"It read 100.7. See for yourself. They sell them at the pharmacy for \$25.

Go to the dinner tonight."

No signature.

Abe yawns and types:

"There is no din-"

He stops, then deletes it. He retypes:

"Melanie?"

He sends, then sits and waits for a reply.

Seconds past... nothing. His eyes begin to droop. He grabs his drink and downs it. Just as he does.....

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. VOID - ABE'S DREAM

ABE
(non-voiced)
GAHHHHHHHH!!!!

We suddenly see Abe huddled in a ball on the floor again. We're back in the black void. Ruth stands before him.

ABE SCREAMS, trapped in his dream- his nightmare -once again. Then...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ROOM - MOTEL - MORNING

Abe jolts awake. His head is flat on his desk as drool puddles under his cheek.

He sits up... groggy again. He looks around the room, noticing the morning glow. In his drowsiness, he knocks his glass off the desk and onto the carpeted floor.

He slowly picks it up, sets it back on the desk. He's disappointed in himself...

BOWERS (PRE-LAP)
*"This is Richard Bowers, please
leave a message at the tone."*

EXT. MAIN STREET - AXTELL - MORNING

Abe drives down Main Street, no longer empty of Axtell townfolk. He's on his phone:

ABE
(in phone)
It's Abe. Call me back as soon as
you can.
(he hesitates)
There's something off. I- I need to
test one more...

As he slowly drives, he notices something:

Melanie, walking down the sidewalk. She's greeted by every person she passes. She doesn't greet them back.

ABE (CONT'D)
Just call me back.

He hangs up and follows her.

Melanie walks into the town pharmacy.

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

Abe plops a bottle of aspirin into his basket. Next to it: a large bottle of tonic water.

He looks about the store aisles for Melanie, but no luck.

Either the pharmacy looks a lot smaller on the outside or Mel has vanished into thin air.

He enters the medical-care aisle. He finds a cheap ear thermometer. He tosses it into his basket and moves towards the aisle's end, when:

Melanie speed walks past the corner, almost tripping over Abe. She jumps and tries to catch herself, dropping bottles of pills to the floor.

The pills from inside spill everywhere.

MELANIE
Fuck!

ABE
I'm so sorry.

She quickly bends down and tries cupping them in her hands. Abe tries to help.

ABE (CONT'D)	MELANIE
Here, let me- No, it's my fault- I should- I'm sorry.	It's alright, I can do it- look just leave it.

Abe picks up the two, half-empty bottles. One labeled:

Paxil.

On the other:

Tramadol.

Abe stops at the sight of the prescriptions. Melanie notices and takes them. She spares her time and shoves everything from the floor into her pockets.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Listen. Can you um... can you do me favor?

ABE

What?

MELANIE

Can you just go buy your things at the counter? Like this never happened.

ABE

Melanie, are these-

MELANIE

Please?

Abe hesitates, but...

MOMENTS LATER

Abe stands his post at the register. A friendly-looking middle-aged woman checks out his things. Abe doesn't pay attention to her nor the crooked smile she keeps giving him.

Instead, towards the back, he sees Melanie, stuffing her pockets and fleeing out the back exit.

REGISTER WOMAN (O.S.)

Will that be all, Father?

Abe scoffs at what he saw, what he just let her do...

REGISTER WOMAN (CONT'D)

Father?

ABE

Hm-? Yes. How much?

REGISTER WOMAN

On the house. Orders of Father McKinley. God Bless you...

Her smile is wide. A bit too wide for Abe's comfort.

ABE

Oh... oh, um- okay. Thank you.

He flees.

EXT. MAIN STREET - AXTELL - DAY

Melanie continues back where she came from down Main Street. She plays it cool for a young shoplifter. Clearly she's done this before, when...

ABE
Melanie!

She looks to the street. Abe cruises next to her in the sedan.

ABE (CONT'D)
Need a ride?

MELANIE
I'm fine.

ABE
I'm going your way.

Melanie stops. She looks about Main Street, seeing if anyone watches.

I/E. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Melanie sits silent in the passenger seat. Abe fights hard to find the words. All he can come up with...

ABE
Are they for him?

Melanie doesn't respond. She watches the road.

ABE (CONT'D)
Melanie, Tramadol is an opiate.
It's for surgery. How'd you even
get it over the counter?

MELANIE
Is this a confession?

ABE
It can be... if you want.

Melanie goes quiet.

ABE (CONT'D)
You stole them. Some could need-

MELANIE

You think anyone here prescribes to anything other than the word of your god?

This trumps Abe. He smiles from her boldness.

ABE

You're a skeptic.

Melanie doesn't respond.

ABE (CONT'D)

Helluva town to be one... I get it.

Beat. Abe realizes.

ABE (CONT'D)

The antidepressants. Who for?

Still nothing from her.

ABE (CONT'D)

Maslow has no medical history for-

MELANIE

Maslow has no medical history, period. He's 8.

ABE

If he or even your parents were prescribed something like that, I'd have to know-

MELANIE

Who told you that? McKinley?

Pause. Abe laughs.

ABE

McKinley is a lot of things... jingoistic, I'm aware. But that's defiance of both church and the law. I'd have to know, before I can rightfully-

MELANIE

Then why'd you buy the thermometer?

Abe lights up... "did she just confess to the emails?"

ABE

Mel-

MELANIE

I'd like to finish my confession now. In the name of the father and the holy-whatever... if that's okay.

Abe stops. His thoughts race from Melanie's words.

INT. MASLOW'S ROOM - DAY

Mel's words still ring in his ear, even before the rabid Maslow. Before the big moment... the exorcism. Then...

MCKINLEY

Abraham?

Abe snaps to his attention. McKinley stands to his side. Wilson looms in the corner, again.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

Let's begin.

Abe nods timidly.

In Abe's hands: an orb of water, capped by a top with a cross on it. A stole drapes over his shoulders.

The remains of his rosaries sit in his other hand. He kisses them and places them at the foot of the bed.

ABE

Our Father who art in heaven-

Maslow screams in his bed. Abe continues over...

ABE (CONT'D)

Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

The boy pulls on his cuffs, now padded.

ABE (CONT'D)

Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation...

MASLOW

(over Abe--)
FUCK YOU! I'LL KILL YOU!!!
STOOOOOOPPPP!!! NO,
STOOOPPPP!!!

Abe hesitates the end of the prayer. He seems lost in Maslow's painful pleas. Then:

MCKINLEY
And deliver us from evil.

ABE
Amen.

MCKINLEY
Amen.

WILSON
Amen.

Maslow continues to struggle. Abe removes the orb's cap.

MASLOW
WHAT IS THAT?!

ABE
Holy water.

Abe signs the cross over himself.

ABE (CONT'D)
In the name of the father...

He splashes water on Maslow. The boy screams at its impact.

INT. HALL - MILLER HOUSE - SAME TIME

Melanie listens from outside. She can't take it. She fights tears rolling down her face.

INT. MASLOW'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Abe continues to splash Maslow. Maslow's cries are more painful than ever before. McKinley screams over him.

MCKINLEY
BE GONE, DEMON! BY THE BLOOD OF
CHRIST, BE GONE!!! DAMN YOU!!!

Abe becomes hesitant of the boy's screaming. He remembers:

FLASH CUT: The video Abe saw in the bar. The woman he felt was being attack instead of saved...

Abe keeps going as McKinley grows more excited over Maslow's screams.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)
BY THE WILL OF GOD!!! THE POWER OF
CHRIST COMPELS THEE!!!

ANOTHER QUICK FLASH: Ruth...

This stops Abe, almost dropping the water. McKinley notices.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

Abraham?

Abe hands the water to McKinley. McKinley takes it and begins splashing the boy, excitedly.

Abe removes a bible from his pocket. He reads:

<p>ABE</p> <p>GOD of Heaven, GOD of Earth, GOD of Angels, GOD of Archangels, GOD of Patriarchs, GOD of Prophets, GOD of Apostles, GOD of Confessors, GOD of Virgins, GOD Who has power to give life after death and rest after work, because there is no other GOD than Thee...</p>	<p>MASLOW</p> <p>SHUT UP!!! I CAN'T!!!! I DON'T WANT IT!!! FUCK YOU, MOTHERFUCKER!!!! FUCKIN STOP!!! AHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!</p>
--	--

MCKINLEY

(to Maslow)

SILENCE, DEMON! SILENCE!

McKinley splashes Maslow again. Maslow spits at him, some blood follows it.

McKinley slaps the boy in response. He then lays his head on the boy's head. Abe stops.

The boy looks as if he's no longer fighting back. Instead, he cowers away in pain. Abe closes his bible.

McKinley continues, passionately so...

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, I
 CONDEMN YOU SO-!

ABE

Gentlemen.

McKinley stops. He looks to Abe.

ABE (CONT'D)

The next part requires privacy. I
 need the room.

MCKINLEY

Abe?

ABE
Give me the room.

McKinley moves to Abe in frustration, almost charging.

MCKINLEY
Now listen, Abraham. I will not let
you-

--SLAM--

Without hesitation, Abe grabs McKinley by the collar and
throws him against a wall. Wilson springs from the corner.

ABE
In the name of GOD, Father! It's
for the boy! Give me the room...
now.

Silence. Sheriff Herald grabs Abe to pull him off McKinley.

ABE (CONT'D)
Get your hands off me!

He doesn't. The two struggle close with each other, then-

MCKINLEY
Do as he says, Willy.

He does. Abe then releases McKinley.

ABE
I'll call you back, when I need
you.

McKinley and Wilson move for the door. McKinley gives Abe a
long, skeptical glare. They leave.

The second the door closes...

Abe sighs. His entire demeanor changes as he turns to Maslow.
He removes a phone from his jacket pocket.

He's been recording a video the whole time. He places it on a
table for a better angle of the boy.

He moves to his bag and removes the ear thermometer.

ABE (CONT'D)
Well... sorry for the dramatics.

Abe approaches the bed, pulling a key from thin air. He
snagged it off Wilson in their tussle.

ABE (CONT'D)
I usually don't like to yell,
but... I needed them out.

MASLOW
Why?

Abe moves to one of Maslow's restraints. He unlocks it.
Maslow remains still.

ABE
So we could talk, Mas.

MASLOW
Don't call me that!

ABE
Right... you ever gonna tell me who
you really are? Or do you not know?

MASLOW
I'm the devil!

ABE
I thought he just spoke to you.

Beat. Maslow is quiet, unsure of Abe's calmness with him.
Abe lifts the orb of "holy water."

ABE (CONT'D)
Do you know what this is?

MASLOW
Holy water...

He hisses at it.

ABE
It's tonic water. Used by bar
tenders.

MASLOW
No, it isn't.

ABE
Poured it myself.

MASLOW
You're tricking me!

ABE
I'm afraid not, Maslow.

Maslow explodes:

<p>MASLOW DON'T CALL ME THAT! YOU TRICKED ME! YOU FUCKING LIAR! THEY SAID YOU WERE HERE TO HURT! YOU LIED! LEAVE US ALONE, YOU FUCK! FUCK YOU! SHUT UP! SHUT UP-!</p>	<p>ABE (CONT'D) (patient) Mas.... Maslow, please... Maslow...</p>
---	--

Abe cuts him off entirely with:

ABE (CONT'D)
MASLOW MILLER, YOU CONTINUE TO YELL
AT ME SO AND I SWEAR I WILL TELL
YOUR MOTHER!! DO YOU WANT THAT?!

Maslow screams, letting it all out. His screams begin to dry out, he can't take it anymore when, suddenly...

The screams stop. Maslow's eyes wander, looking slightly crossed. They look up, as if he were having a seizure. His body tenses, but his screams have silenced. The tension releases. Then, suddenly...

Maslow begins to cry. Not the same as before. It's softer. These are not the cries of a demon, but of a scared boy...

Abe steps back, his eyes shocked.

MASLOW
(crying)
Pleeeeeeaaaseee, don't tell my mom!
I'm sorryyyyyyy! I'm sorry, please!

ABE
(to himself)
Oh my god...

INT. LIVING ROOM - MILLER HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Abe quickly comes down the hall. He moves to the front door with haste. Marcus and Mary Anne stand from the couch.

MARY ANNE
Father Aubry?

Abe doesn't listen. He continues to the door.

MCKINLEY
Abraham! Would you like me to...
(he sees)
Are you leaving?

ABE

(dramatically)

Yes. I need to return to my motel at once. There's something in there I've never seen before... I need to make a call...

MCKINLEY

Perhaps I could-

Abe ignores McKinley and opens the door to exit.

ABE

That's okay. Marcus? Mary Anne? Don't you worry, I promise... I will be back for your son.

He leaves. McKinley moves to the window and watches him.

EXT. MILLER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Abe doesn't look back, but drops the charade. He knows McKinley is watching. He gets into his car and starts it.

Just as he drives off, a few houses down, the taillights of another car illuminate. It's Sheriff Herald's police car. He pulls off as well, following Abe.

ABE (PRE-LAP)

You lied to me.

I/E. CAR - MAIN STREET - AFTERNOON

Abe drives down main street. We can see Sheriff Herald's car lingering behind. Abe does not. He speaks on the phone with...

INT. OFFICE - ST. MARY'S CHURCH - INTERCUT

Bowers. He's panicked at his desk from Abe's anger.

BOWERS

Abe...

ABE

You told me he was approved. That's only legitimate with psychiatric evaluation. Who allowed that?

BOWERS

McKinley had sent-

ABE

(dry)

And that's why you wanted me as a
"spy-" you trusted him that much...

(hurt)

You never planned on trusting him.

Beat. Bowers is speechless.

BOWERS

I'm sorry, Abe.

ABE

This was never about the boy, was
it?

Abe looks in his rear view mirror. He finally sees the car...
Wilson is tailing him, keeping a little distance.

BOWERS

Abe, I can help-

Abe hangs up the phone, keeping his eye on Wilson.

EXT. PARKING LOT - MOTEL - LATER

Abe exits his sedan.

He walks towards his motel, glancing over his shoulder to see
Wilson's car, already parked and running in Holy Trinity's
lot. He's not even trying to hide.

INT. ROOM - MOTEL - NIGHT

Wilson's car remains, lights on and well within view of Abe's
motel window. Townsfolk begin entering the church for another
evening dinner.

Abe stares at the Sheriff's car, unable to see Wilson inside.
He closes his blinds.

Behind Abe we hear the video recording of Maslow from his
phone. It plays on his desk.

ABE (RECORDING)

*"MASLOW MILLER, YOU CONTINUE TO
YELL AT ME SO AND I SWEAR I WILL
TELL YOUR MOTHER!! DO YOU WANT
THAT?!"*

We then re-hear Maslow's cries change after a spasm. The
sound suddenly stops despite Abe being at the window.

We hear another voice:

RICHIE (O.S.)

Wait.

Abe turns to his laptop.

ABE

What is it?

A familiar bar napkin rests next to his laptop. We move to the illuminated screen, revealing:

Dr. "Richie" Farrow- the stranger from the airport -sitting on the opposite end of a Skype call. He's in his office, wearing reading glasses as he reviews Abe's tape of Maslow.

RICHIE

Hold on.

He does. We hear the same cries from Maslow. He stops it.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Okay...

Richie sighs. He removes his glasses, overwhelmed by what he's just seen.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Listen, Abe... I need you to understand that anything I have to share could contradict belief that-

ABE

I understand.

Beat. Richie takes another breath then:

RICHIE

You saw that change he did, right? His shift in voice. The crying.

ABE

Yes.

RICHIE

His body gives similar impression to having a severe seizure- look at his eyes. That I normally identify to dissociative patients, most with Dissociative Identity Disorder. Other symptoms: delusions, mood-swings... It's when-

ABE

I know what it is. Is that your official impression?

RICHIE

It's a video, Abe... I couldn't even assume a diagnosis unless I met him. Can sometimes take several years. I can check instability for legal sake, but-

Abe looks to him, anxiously.

ABE

Richie.

RICHIE

It looks like it. And if so, I advise immediate treatment before it could get worse.

ABE

What do you mean?

RICHIE

Well, that's complicated, Abe.

ABE

Simplify it. Please.

Beat. Richie takes another breath.

RICHIE

(breaking it down)

Say I'm 10. My Dad really wants me to play baseball. I take a few swings with him, turns out I'm shit. Dad screams at me. My brain can't process that, I'm too scared. That's where it starts. The first severing of another personality. And, more likely than not, whoever comes out of that is going to believe they're the greatest baseball player god decided to put on the planet. That's a shield to protect the host from the truth. From anymore harm.

(beat)

Using that same logic. Say I have D.I.D. and I know nothing about any of this. About science, about... And then I'm told I'm possessed. I'm a some demon.

(MORE)

RICHIE (CONT'D)

The way that I'm told this is... unpleasant. The first severing begins in response. Well... what do you think comes out of that?

Abe sinks his head into his hands.

He looks back to his laptop. Left in his opened tabs he sees the remains of an email. It catches his attention.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Abe?

He reads it, the bottom of both *philly268's* messages:

Go to the dinner. You'll see.

Abe looks to his window. He stands.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Abe.

ABE

One second...

He approaches his window and opens his blinds. Willy's car is gone, but the church is lively. Ready for another "dinner."

INT. LOBBY - HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - NIGHT

Abe enters the lobby to Holy Trinity Church. It glows red and orange from lit candle posts lining the walls.

We hear muffled voices from behind the door of the main hall. One in particular drowns out the rest, it's passionate to the point of screaming... likely McKinley. It's hard to make out what he's saying.

He approaches the doors. They're chained shut... he looks about the lobby, finding a flight of stairs hidden in shadow.

INT. MAIN HALL - HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - NIGHT

Just as Abe reaches the top of the stairs, the muffled voices become more clear, but now we only hear two:

One, a screaming child. It's Maslow...

The other...

MCKINLEY (O.S.)
 DE PROFUNDIS CLAMAVI AD TE,
 DOMINE...!!

Abe turns the corner off the stairs, onto a balcony looking over the main hall. He stops, petrified by what he sees:

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)
 DOMINE, EXAUDI VOCEM MEAM...!!

Maslow, screaming, strapped to a handmade, wooden version of THE RACK-- the torture device from the Spanish inquisition. Younger boys, stand at each side of the device, pulling it tighter.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)
 FIANT AURES TUAE INTENDENTES, IN
 VOCEM DEPRECATIONIS MEAE...!!

Over Maslow stands McKinley, draped in a purple cloak. All of Axtell surrounds them in red cloaks with their heads bowed...

To McKinley's side stands Wilson, holding a riding whip you'd use for a horse. He strikes Maslow with it -- *THWAP*

Maslow screams...

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)
 (to assistants)
 Pull. Harder...

They do. Maslow continues to scream.

Abe removes his phone and begins recording from the top of the balcony, not knowing what else he can do.

Behind Wilson stands the rest of the Miller clan. Mary Anne and Marcus look emotionless towards their tortured son. Marcus wraps his arms around Melanie, covered in tears and fighting her Dad.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)
 SI INIQUITATES OBSEVEVARIS, DOMINE:
 DOMINE, QUIS SUSTINEBIT?!

Wilson strikes Maslow again, drawing blood. The boy screams.

Melanie breaks from her father's arms, charging for the whip in Wilson's hand.

MELANIE
 (sobbing)
 STOP!!!! PLEASE!!!

Abe drops his phone, moving as if he could stop Melanie. He stops himself. He's helpless.

Wilson grabs Mel by the throat before she can reach the whip. He moves to strike her, when...

MCKINLEY

STOP!

Wilson does, looking quick to Father McKinley.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

Wilson... punishment does not resort to the purity of our women. That's why we start the boys strong. Body and will. Remember..?

McKinley turns to Mel.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

But clearly, the evil that leaks its stench from young Maslow has given you some guidance... Father Aubry can attest to that, can't he?

Mel's eyes widen in fear. McKinley smiles and turns to the rest of Axtell:

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

Someone must show her the bright light of the lord. Remind her and bow to his way of glory. Receive the punishment for this evil.

A younger man appears excitedly, he looks no older than nineteen.

THOMAS

I will, Father.

MCKINLEY

And their you have it! Remember the story of the good samaritan? Here he is, ladies and gentlemen.

(to Wilson)

Hold her.

He does. Melanie struggles more with him than she did her dad.

MELANIE

Thomas, No! NO! PLEASE! I DIDN'T MEAN-! THOMAS, STOP! DON'T!

MCKINLEY

Boys?

The four boys around the rack now surround the younger man, they remove bibles from their cloaks.

The volunteer, THOMAS, smiles. He lifts his cloak, revealing his torso. Some bruises and marks already lie there. They look similar to Maslow's.

She calls desperately for her parents:

MELANIE

MOM! DAD! PLEASE! STOP THIS!!!!

They don't move a muscle. Mary Anne even smiles, though Marcus looks slightly distraught for Mel...

MCKINLEY

In the name of the father...
(to the boys)
Begin.

The four cloaked boys begin to beat Thomas with their bibles. Thomas takes it easily at first, holding his smile.

They continue, smacking him harder. Thomas' smile begins to fade.

One boy strikes him in the gut, sending Thomas to his knees. His smile is gone.

MELANIE

PLEASE, STOP!!!

They don't. Thomas now falls to the ground as they continue to strike. He spits up a bit of blood, but... he forces a smile again. He wails, but not in pain... in glory.

McKinley watches with a smile. He examines the rest of Axtell watching, too... that is until he notices something.

In the corner of his eye, a figure in the shadowed balcony: Abe.

He double takes at the figure, but he's gone...

Abe hides behind the corner of the staircase. He breathes heavily. He begins to breakdown in tears, he's helpless...

He can only sit there and listen to the echoed wails of Thomas, Melanie, and of course... Maslow.

It rings in his ear. Then...

INT. ROOM - MOTEL - MORNING

Abe jumps awake from his Motel bed, knocking a brandy glass onto the floor. It breaks. Abe ignores it...

He's fully clothed. He looks out the window. The church parking lot is empty for the morning.

Was last night a dream...? He remembers: the video!

Abe reaches for his pockets to only find nothing, forgetting that he dropped his phone.

EXT. MAIN STREET - AXTELL - DAY

Melanie walks a little faster than usual down Main Street. She's being watched. She dashes past any townsfolk who try to greet her.

She reaches the curb of a street, where...

--ABE'S SEDAN COMES OUT OF NOWHERE. He stops in front of Melanie, window rolled down.

ABE

Get in.

She looks around. She's nervous, but not of Abe.

I/E. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

They sit in silence again. Abe looks back and forth between the road and his rearview mirror.

Melanie notices, she tries to look behind--

ABE

Don't. Just look ahead.

She does. Abe continues driving.

Mel gets a glimpse of the side view mirror seeing, behind them, Wilson's cop car. He's tailing Abe once again.

Suddenly Abe slams on the gas and passes three cars ahead of him. He cuts one off, and makes a turn, leaving Wilson in the dust.

He sighs in relief.

MELANIE

What's going on?

ABE

You're going to tell me everything
you know about your brother. No
more emails...

Abe drives off, to where no one can follow or watch them...

I/E. CAR - FIELD - LATER

Rolling plains. We once again see the welcome-sign just
outside of Axtell. Abe leans on the sedan. Melanie remains in
the passenger seat.

They're silent. Melanie is exhausted having just told Abe
everything she knows. Abe shakes his head.

ABE

Why..?

MELANIE

No one knows why. Just always has
been. Starting the boys early, it's
now tradition. Maslow just ended up
differently than the rest.

Abe thinks out loud for himself:

ABE

They just watched him... McKinley.
Like... like pod people.

MELANIE

Desperate faith likes a hero.

ABE

But your parents... they just stood
there. I don't-

MELANIE

Leave them out of it, please.

Abe stops. Giving to her wish.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

I'm horrible to them. They deserve
it. But they haven't known what
they've been doing for awhile...

(beat)

That story they told you. About
Indianapolis. The trombone and the
mailbox, it wasn't...

She sighs.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

That wasn't my birthday... it was my little brother's. Maslow's older brother's... I was five. Mom was so happy...

ABE

What happened?

MELANIE

I knew I'd make a good big sister. He never had a name. Most stillborns don't. Mom had a whole list of them, but she made herself forget those soon after. It was that, the meds, or blame herself for it. Dad was the same. That's when we moved out here: a place to either forget or punish yourself for what you've done... That's the story of most people here. The ones who think they deserve punishment... The ones susceptible. And then those who were born into it. Like Maslow...

Beat. Abe sits, thinking over what she's just said. Then...

ABE

I'm getting him to a hospital, Mel. I'm taking you, too.

MELANIE

Call the police, the real ones...

ABE

I'd try if I had my phone... but even so, your unstable, eight-year-old brother ends up alone in a jail as they figure out what to do with him. I'm arrested for kidnapping... no legal diagnosis... no warrant...

MELANIE

Is there any way? I can't just-

ABE

There is...

He looks to her.

ABE (CONT'D)

I just needed your permission before I do it.

--KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK (PRE-LAP)

I/E. MILLER HOUSE - DAY

It's the following day. Mary Anne swings open the front door to see Abe, his usual bag slung over his shoulder. To his left...

It's Dr. Richie Farrow! He's dressed in a priest's uniform.

MARY ANNE

Father Aubry! This is a surprise-
(she notices)
And who is..?

ABE

Had to make a call for support from
St. Mary's. May I introduce "Father
Karras."

Richie reaches out his hand. Mary shakes hesitantly.

MARY ANNE

Does Father McKinley-?

ABE

McKinley had to take a rain check,
but he trusted I'd be well with
Karras here. May we...?

MARY ANNE

Y- Yes. Of course...

They enter.

INT. HALL - MILLER HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The two move down the hall to Maslow's bedroom. Suddenly, Abe removes a note from his pocket and drops it to the floor.

ABE

(faking)

Oh!

He stops and bends down, pretending to tie his shoe. He slides the note under the door to his side.

Richie sneaks a glance behind him, seeing Mary Anne, now joined by Marcus, watching them from the hall's end.

INT. MELANIE'S ROOM - SAME

Abe's note slides under Mel's door, grabbing her attention as she lies on her bed listening to music.

She moves to the note and picks it up:

"Your brother's room. Wait 5 minutes.

- philly 268"

INT. MASLOW'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Melanie quietly enters Maslow's room, closing the door behind her. She sees Dr. Farrow, a stranger.

MELANIE

(re: Richie)

Why is he dressed like that?

ABE

I've seen what McKinley's capable of with a child. I don't need to see what he'll do to a man.

Maslow struggles once again. Richie tries to get a look at him.

MASLOW

NO! NO! NO! NO!

ABE

Maslow, please...

MASLOW

GET THE FUCK AWAY FROM ME! HE'S HURTING ME!

ABE

Maslow, he's just trying to--

Farrow gets too close.

--BANG--

Maslow head-butts Farrow, launching him back.

RICHIE

Fuck!

His nose bleeds. Abe goes to help him.

ABE

MAS-

Melanie finally cuts in.

MELANIE

Maslow! ...calm down, okay?!

Maslow sees Melanie at the back of the room. His viciousness immediately settles. His body tenses.

He dissociates, back to...

MASLOW

Melanie..? Don't yell at me,
please...

Maslow begins to cry. He's scared. His presence is more gentle with Melanie.

Melanie approaches his bed, sitting right by him.

MELANIE

No, no, no, no. It's okay. I won't
yell at you.

Abe stands, helping Richie up. He's stunned by Mel's effect on the boy.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

(to Abe)

He doesn't act like that with me.

Abe nods.

Mel moves off the bed, trading with Abe as he begins to uncuff Maslow. Maslow begins to panic.

MASLOW

Mel- M- Mel, what're they doing?!

MELANIE

They're going to help us, Mas-

MASLOW

No, no, no-

MELANIE

They're gonna get us somewhere
safe.

MASLOW

What about Daddy and-?

ABE

I promise, you'll see them as soon
as I get you somewhere safe.

Maslow shakes his head. He still doesn't trust Abe.

MASLOW

(blowing up)
No, no, no, no, no, no, no,
no, no- get away, get away
from me-!

MELANIE

Maslow, no. Calm down! Mas,
please, please, calm down,
okay..?

Abe thinks fast. He can't risk Maslow dissociating again. He
needs his trust:

ABE

(very gentle)
Hey, hey- Mas. Look at me. Maslow?

Maslow calms, but keeps whimpering.

ABE (CONT'D)

You want to hold something?

Abe removes something from his pockets: the broken rosary
beads. He shows them to Maslow.

ABE (CONT'D)

Do you know what these are? These
are rosaries. Has anyone given you
any before?

Maslow, sobbing, shakes his head "no."

ABE (CONT'D)

They're to help count, to remember
our prayers, to help us and remind
us to help others. These were my
sisters: Ruth. Last time I saw her,
she would've been only few years
older than you. When I left home
she gave me these. She would've
liked you.

Beat. Maslow listens, his tears begin to dissipate.

ABE (CONT'D)

She was different, too. Like you- a
lot like you, Mas. My parents
didn't know what to do either.
Doctors were too expensive, and...
They turned to my priest- my
friend, for help and there wasn't
much he could offer.

(MORE)

ABE (CONT'D)

So, they found a stranger who they thought could help. Somebody who said he could fix her. Someone like me. But he lied. They never told me what happened, but... a few years later, they had to tell me...

He stops himself, unsure whether to continue. But...

ABE (CONT'D)

Ruth took her own life. There wasn't anything I could do. I was helpless. I've had to live with that. It's why I joined the priesthood, and it's why I will not stop until you're safe. Never helpless again... you understand?

Maslow slowly nods. Melanie and Richie are both frozen, stunned from Abe's confession.

Abe turns to Richie:

ABE (CONT'D)

Are we ready?

INT. LIVING ROOM - MILLER HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Abe enters the living room with haste. His belongings are all packed. Richie follows close behind.

ABE

(starting)

Mr. and Mrs. Miller? You'll have to excuse the two of us. St. Mary's-

McKinley stands from the couch, a warm, welcoming smirk on his face.

MCKINLEY

Ah! Abraham! There you are...

Abe freezes. As does Richie right behind him.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

There was word of an additional St. "Marian" in our midst! I felt obliged to welcome him.

McKinley approaches Richie. Richie can't help but sweat...

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

Father..?

Richie hesitates.

RICHIE
"Karras."

McKinley hears that. He waits a bit.

MCKINLEY
(smiling)
Hm.

He nods and moves on to Abe.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)
How would you two like to join me
for dinner. Lovely place. My treat-

ABE
That's okay. St. Mary's said-

MCKINLEY
Father Bowers was quite happy to
hear of Karras' arrival. Said he
was sure that with you two and
myself... It's all under control.

Abe stops.

ABE
Bowers?

MCKINLEY
Yes. Just now, on the phone...
(beat)
What? He didn't tell you..?

McKinley gives Abe a smile. Is he bluffing or..?

INT. RESTAURANT - AXTELL - NIGHT

The lights are dimmed, almost entirely candlelit. What you'd expect from a nicer Italian joint. That is... nice for Axtell. It's packed tonight, every table full.

McKinley, Abe, and Richie sit at a rounded table, center of the main dining hall. Richie hides his nervousness, but maintains his composure.

Abe only stares at the table, unsure of what to do. He needs to get Richie out of here...

They sit in silence as McKinley smugly drinks a glass of Red Wine.

In front of the others: glasses of brandy. Similar looking to the brandy Abe's been having each night.

McKinley sips his wine down. Clears his throat, then...

MCKINLEY
(to Richie)
Not one for wine, are you, Father
Karras?

Richie mid-sip of brandy, nervously looks to McKinley. He coughs from his drink.

RICHIE
(coughing)
What makes you say that?

MCKINLEY
Well, normally, Italian dinner
calls for Italian tradition.
Cultural passion. Wine being one of
them. Pino Noir. Grigio. Cabernet-

RICHIE
The waiter was very passionate
about the brandy.

MCKINLEY
Right... right, that he was.
Wouldn't want to disappoint. Cause
any tension.

Pause. McKinley notices Abe's silence.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)
You too, Father?

Abe perks up.

ABE
Hm?

MCKINLEY
Didn't want to disappoint the
waiter?

Beat. Then...

ABE
I like the taste...

MCKINLEY
Oh, I'm aware. But with Italian? A
bourbon over a wine-?

ABE
Is it an issue?

MCKINLEY
Not an issue. Just like I said...
tradition and all. Wine and the
classic Italian meal is timeless,
it's passionate, it works... Like
other things. A Pino Noir would do-

ABE
That's a french wine...

MCKINLEY
Hm.

Beat. Abe drinks, coughing from it as well.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)
(to Abe)
What troubles you?

Abe looks to him, trying to stop his coughing.

ABE
What?

MCKINLEY
I sense a coldness. What is it?

ABE
It's nothing.

MCKINLEY
You're giving up on the boy?

ABE
I never said that.

MCKINLEY
You expected things to go quicker.
For your methods to... well, work.

ABE
You could put it that way.

MCKINLEY
Is it tiring you?

Richie coughs. He sips his drink to temper it.

ABE
What?

MCKINLEY
The exorcism?

ABE
It's not unknown for these things
to take time.

MCKINLEY
(slightly hostile)
Then what is it which looms that
sour look on your face? At me..?

Slight pause. Then:

ABE
Fear.

Beat.

McKinley holds his eye contact with Abe. Their stare refuses
to part. When...

Richie coughs.

MCKINLEY
(to Richie)
Where are you from, Father?

RICHIE
Huh?

MCKINLEY
I was asking, "where are you from?"

RICHIE
(quickly)
Indianapolis?

MCKINLEY
Really? Certified through St.
Mary's?

RICHIE
Yes. Of course I am...

MCKINLEY
As an exorcist?

Richie's composure begins to crack. He coughs. He sips his
drink to stop it.

RICHIE
Yes.

MCKINLEY
 Father Bowers never-

RICHIE
 Oh! Yes! Bowers and I are dear
 friends. Well aware of-

MCKINLEY
 I'm not finished.

Pause. Abe glares at McKinley.

McKinley lets out a jolly giggle, splitting the silence.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)
 Forgive me, but... I'm confused.

He continues to giggle. Richie coughs over it.

ABE
 (w/ a guilty cough)
 What confuses you?

MCKINLEY
 Well, you're from Boston?

ABE
 I'm from Indianapolis-

MCKINLEY
 No, no, no, no- your file... "Gates
 of Heaven Church. Boston, Mass--"

ABE
 You're right, but I'm from
 Indianapolis...
 (pause)
 That's in my file, too.

McKinley stares at him, confidently.

ABE (CONT'D)
 Still confused?

MCKINLEY
 Why would he send you?

Richie coughs, trying to remain silent.

ABE
 I'm sorry?

MCKINLEY

Well, I was under the impression
you were here because there were no
certified exorcists in the state...

He gestures to Richie.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

We have one right here... so why
you?

Now Abe guiltily coughs.

ABE

Father Bowers has an exclusive way
of things and he trusts me, so-

MCKINLEY

My apologies, Abe, but didn't
Father Karras just say he and
Bowers are "dear friends?"
(to Richie)
Didn't you?

Richie stops his coughing.

RICHIE

Y- yes... I did.

Abe eyeballs Richie. The doctor's eyes fall to the table. His
glass is empty. He's sweating and still coughing...

Abe lets one out too, small and under his breath.

Abe looks up to see McKinley locking eyes with him. A smirk
on his face. It's silent, until...

WAITER

(to McKinley)
Evening, Father.
(to the rest)
Are we ready to order?

McKinley breaks their stare. Abe does as well, looking about
the faces of the restaurant. He scans over the tables,
feeling as if he catches glances from multiple townsfolk.

Something's wrong...

MCKINLEY

Of course. I will have the chicken
cutlet with the house salad if you
don't mind, Thomas.

Wait... Thomas? Abe looks up to see the waiter. It's the boy from the other night, still bruised on the face from his beating. It's covered with make-up.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

Karras?

Richie is still fighting his cough. He stands, covered in sweat.

RICHIE

(coughing)

Excuse me.

Richie leaves for the bathroom.

MCKINLEY

Abe?

Pause. Abe watches Richie leave. His heart begins to pound.

ABE

(to Thomas)

The same. Please.

Thomas leaves, taking their menus.

BEAT: MCKINLEY AND ABE ARE NOW ALONE...

The silence is cold as ice. Abe clocks a few more heads in the crowd looking at him.

Now Abe coughs, breaking the silence...

MCKINLEY

Chicken cutlet here is wild...

More silence. Abe sips his drink and coughs again from it.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

You remind me of my father. He was a drinker once.

ABE

Was he?

MCKINLEY

Everyday he did. Killed him, just as it did my mother. He shot her. Clean in the head. No mercy. Right in our porcelain kitchen. I remember when the white tile made her blood more... vibrant.

(MORE)

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

Didn't have the same effect when it was all over me.

He sips his wine. Abe lets out another cough.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

After he did it, that's when finally noticed I was in the room. You know what he said to me?

Abe is quiet.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

He said: "boy, what do you tell a man with eyes like mine when he grips *your* life in *his* hands?"

(to Abe)

He was a dramatic. Do you know..?

Abe shakes his head.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

"Nothing. You just make sure he knows your holding his as well..." Then he shot himself. Very poetic. Man of god. Man of insobriety. Man calling for redemption. Remind you of any one?

Abe only stares at McKinley. He looks away with a heavier cough. He sips the rest of his drink.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

(smiling)

Now, you being here and my father is sheer coincidence, but it is fascinating. The almighty does work in mysterious ways... damnedest thing. But, with that... allow me to propose the same question.

McKinley props a phone on the table. It's Abe's, in the middle of playing the video he took of Maslow's beating.

Abe's heart stops. McKinley smiles.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

No more tape recorder? Or is that because... simply... your methods on that demon won't work, Father. That's okay... I mean no offense. Mine have been struggling just the same. Driven me wild! So, I thought I'd consider other paths.

(MORE)

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

A variable. Another manner of exorcism that I could compare to, see if it made a difference, but alas... Some evil's too strong. I just had to know, before--

McKinley stops himself. Abe fights more coughs but scowls at McKinley.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

You asked me the other night if I had a problem with you. I promise, I do not. I just need you to understand that my methods here in Axtell are non-negotiable and-

ABE

Torturing children on "the rack" is non-negotiable?

MCKINLEY

(correcting)

Strengthening of their spirit is non-negotiable. No matter the cost. Look what it did me.

ABE

I don't think the book of god ever said that.

MCKINLEY

It didn't. I did.

ABE

So you're a prophet.

McKinley shakes his, not taking kindly to Abe's comment.

MCKINLEY

No... I'm a leader. A hero in God's plan. An ambassador for his mercy. A survivor. A helper...

(beat)

The prophets of today are blind. The church of today is blind... Beware blind prophets. They'll pose wisdom until the day they trick you pull you into the flames of hell...

Another rough cough, and...

ABE

Did you write *that* one down?

McKinley smiles, he already has the advantage over Abe. He moves on:

MCKINLEY

Do you know what tamazepam is, Abe?
Not too different from your
tranquilizer. Nasty stuff. Used to
put dogs to sleep. I knew you'd be
fine though.

Abe lets out a heavy cough. He holds his throat. What is wrong with him???

He sweats. His vision is becoming hazy.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

Thought it'd be best my "meetings"
weren't interrupted. I was just
wrong to count on you going for
that brandy every night...
fascinating. I knew I'd like you...
(beat)
Perhaps you'll do it again. Your
doctor friend, too.

Abe keeps coughing...

ABE

(terrified)
What did you do???

Another cough. His vision's a complete blur.

MCKINLEY

It's in your drink, son... just
like the past few nights.

ABE STANDS SHARPLY, launching his chair back and almost losing balance. His glass falls and shatters from the table.

Through his blurred vision he looks around himself. Every head in the restaurant turns to Abe and watches him, all still and all with a cracked, uncomfortable smile.

Abe breathes heavily, trying to stop his cough. He makes a wobbly break for Richie in the bathroom.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

Father?

Thomas comes back with a tray of dishes. Abe charges and knocks him over. Everyone in the restaurant is now standing. Abe pushes them aside, running for Richie.

INT. BATHROOM - RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Abe, barely able to walk, bursts open the door to the men's bathroom.

ABE
(slurring)
Doctor Farrow... Doctor-! Richie!

Abe freezes at the sight of his new friend, lying on the ground unconscious. A splatter of blood at the side of his head from knocking it on a toilet.

A voice from behind Abe:

WILSON
Told you I'd be seeing you.

It's Sheriff Herald. Before Abe can even react, Wilson knocks the back of Abe's knees with a police baton.

Abe plummets to the ground. Then, just as he lands...

I/E. ABE'S DREAM

CRASH

It's as if Abe smashed through a glass ceiling.

Shards of the world's light following as he falls into darkness... into his dream. He reaches out to grab something in his fall, but there's nothing in this void.

He lands suddenly, he groans on the impact, but no sounds come from his mouth. He lies there for a minute, refusing to look up at what he expects... Ruth.

He finally sits up, but to his surprise it's not Ruth standing before him. It's Maslow, staring at Abe.

Then, just as if he were possessed, Abe's whole body tenses. His veins pulse from his neck as if he's being strangled. He puts his hands to his throat as his whole face turns red. He looks to Maslow and blinks, when...

At the second of his blink, Maslow no longer stands before him. It's Melanie. Abe wishes to react, but his face begins pulsing like he's having a seizure. His eyes flicker from twitching, making him blink more. As he blinks, the figure continues to change:

Blink. It's Dr. Farrow.

Blink. It's Father Bowers.

Blink. It's Mary Anne.

Blink. It's Marcus.

Blink. Melanie, again.

Blink. Then Maslow.

Then finally, he blinks... it's Ruth.

Abe's seizure doesn't stop, his body tenses stronger, looking as if it's about to contort by the hands of some spirit. He blinks again, but Ruth remains.

Suddenly a figure appears behind her, holding her hand. Then holding her waist, not sensually, but not invitingly.

It's McKinley, smiling back at Abe.

Abe does everything to fight his pulsing, tense body. All he can do is let out a painful cry. We hear it.

ABE
NOOOOOOO-!!!

INT. ROOM - MOTEL - NIGHT

Abe's eyes snap open as he lifts himself from his bed. He's back in the motel room. The room looks untouched...

It's quiet...

Abe looks to an alarm clock at his side, it's turned off. He looks for his phone, but there's nothing. Still with McKinley. The laptop at his desk, his tape recorder..?

Gone. Only an empty bottle of his brandy remains.

He looks out his window to Holy Trinity Church. All the lights have been turned on. Sheriff Herald's car sits out front, still running.

Abe tries to lift himself off the bed, battling his drugged grogginess, when:

ABE
(to himself)
Ah!

He quickly lifts his legs from the floor, drawing a fair amount of blood from his feet. Glass shards stick from them...

The entire bed is surrounded by piles of broken glass!

Abe lets out a heavy breath as he removes the shards from each foot. He then grabs a section of sheets from the bed. He tears a piece off, applying pressure and tying it to his bleeding feet.

He stands on his bed, wincing from the pain. He looks for a section of the floor untouched... there's an opening near the bathroom, a little close to his desk.

He leaps for the section, clearing the glass but unable to take the pain from his feet's landing. He screams as he falls to floor, now covered in sweat and some blood.

Abe takes in a heavy breath as he lifts himself from the floor. He limps for the bathroom. It's dark in his room, making the bathroom pitch black. He runs the sink before he even switches the light on. He splashes his face with water.

He finally switches the light on, revealing...

A HUMAN-SIZED, WOODEN CROSS SITS DEAD CENTER OF THE BATHROOM. A NAKED BODY, COVERED IN BLOOD, IS STRUNG TO IT--

The shock brings Abe to his knees, he shuffles himself into the wall behind him, right outside the bathroom door. That's when he notices...

It's Richie... dead. There's something written across his chest in blood, likely his own:

"QUI DECIPITUR"

Latin for, "Deceiver."

Abe wants to break into tears. He can't believe what he sees... "this has to still be a dream," he thinks. Then...

The motel room door swings open. A young man enters wearing red robes... it's the boy, Thomas.

Thomas' eyes widen as he sees Abe, awake on the floor. They exchange a hesitant moment of silence. Then...

THOMAS
SHERIFF!!! SHERIFF!!!!

Thomas makes a break for outside.

ABE
WAIT! No, no, NO-!

Abe lifts himself to his feet, taking in the pain. In his scramble, he manages to grab the empty brandy bottle off his desk.

He chases after Thomas.

EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Thomas is fast, but his robes manage to slow him for Abe. He reaches the parking lot, still yelling for help.

Abe fights through the pain to catch him.

THOMAS
SHERIFF!!! HE'S AWAKE!!! SHER-!!

Unable to think of anything else, Abe, just close enough to the boy, smacks him in the head with the bottle.

Thomas falls to the ground. His head hits even harder unto a curb. Abe falls with him, his bleeding feet giving out from the pain.

Thomas is silent at Abe's side. Abe pushes himself up, grabbing Thomas to check if he's okay...

ABE
Thomas? Thomas...

His head pours blood, taking blows from both the bottle and the curb...

He's dead. Abe wells with tears, his mouth agape. He's speechless from what he's just done.

His sobs, but his guilt soon shifts to anger. He looks for his car. Right next to him, but with each tire slashed. It's no use...

He looks to Holy Trinity Church in fury. Wilson's car still sits out front.

EXT. PARKING LOT - HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Abe hobbles closer to Wilson's car, still holding the cracked, bloodied bottle in his hands. He crouches, trying not to be seen.

Wilson is nowhere in sight, but his car still runs. The backseat door sits wide open. Abe approaches it, finding...

Melanie! She's unconscious and handcuffed in the back seat.

Abe leaps to help her, trying to shake her awake.

ABE
(quietly)
Melanie! Mel! I need you to wake
up, Mel-!

She comes to, looking groggy as he did from the tamzepam.

MELANIE
Father..?

She begins to wake more, when suddenly-- she has a flash of fear.

She cries, beginning to struggle with her cuffs and Abe.

MELANIE (CONT'D)
GET OFF! GET OFF ME-!

ABE
Mel! Mel, calm down it's me..!

She settles, seeing that it's not Wilson or McKinley...

MELANIE
Father Aubry?

ABE
What happened?

MELANIE
They- they took him. They took
them, mom and dad... They gave us
something at our house. I don't...
(crying)
I don't know where they are!!

Abe tries his best to calm her.

ABE
Mel, look at me. It's okay... I'm
gonna get you out of-

--YANK--

--SUDDENLY ABE IS PULLED FROM THE CAR AND ROLLS ONTO THE
PAVEMENT!!!

At the same time we hear a voice. It's McKinley. He's calm:

MCKINLEY (V.O.)
 We prayed for the mighty spirit in
 this boy and the mighty still
 falls. We prayed for a savior and
 we're sent a deceiver.

This intercuts with:

INT. MAIN HALL - HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - INTERCUT

The entirety of Axtell stands before McKinley, towering on top of a pedestal with red curtains and candle posts behind.

McKinley wears his purple robe just as the town wears their red.

MCKINLEY
 We pray and pray, but our wanted
 answers are rewarded with
 challenge! With betrayal!

Below him... Maslow. Strapped to a post.

To the boy's sides...

Mary Anne and Marcus, stripped and tied to posts as well. Mary Anne sobs as Marcus screams for help... they've now been lifted from McKinley's spell, seeing his true ways.

One post stands empty... left for Melanie.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)
 Maslow Miller is no more... That
 boy is no longer with us. This boy
 is no boy at all, but a vessel for
 the wickedness and evil that
 condemns us like a cancer...

EXT. HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - SAME

MCKINLEY (V.O.)
 ...that challenges us to duel!

Abe collects himself, now seeing Sheriff Herald standing over him. He pulls a revolver from his holster and aims it at Abe's face.

WILSON
 Deceiver! In the name of the father-

Abe, bottle still in hand, quickly knocks Wilson's hand and the gun out of aim. It fires off at the side of Abe's head.

Melanie screams. Wilson does as well from the pain of his hand, possibly broken now.

The gun flies from Wilson's hand and away from them. Abe immediately makes a crawl for it.

MCKINLEY (V.O.)
And the harbingers of evil...

INT. HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - SAME

Maslow is unconscious. Still asleep from the same drugs used on his family. Mary continues to scream for him.

<p>MCKINLEY ...the ones who conceived him. That accepted him. That called him "son." That brought a more vile evil to INVADE OUR HAVEN!</p>	<p>MARY ANNE HONEY! PLEEEEEEASE!! IM SO SORRY!!! DON'T WAKE UP HONEY!! IM SORRY!! DON'T WAKE-</p>
---	---

A hooded boy whips Mary Anne. She screams.

EXT. HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - SAME

Wilson pins Abe to the ground, trying to bash his head into the pavement. Abe fights back. He remembers... the bottle!

Abe takes a swing for Wilson's head, but it's blocked!

Wilson knocks the bottle from Abe's hand, cracking it more onto the pavement. The two continue to wrestle.

Abe still reaches for the gun. Wilson takes swings at Abe's face. Abe spits blood from his mouth but doesn't give up on his reach...

MCKINLEY (V.O.)
But, what if I'm wrong...

INT. MAIN HALL - HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - SAME

MCKINLEY
But, for a moment... let us humor
that this demon is not a challenge.
These harbingers are not a
challenge. That... DECEIVER IS NOT
CHALLENGE!

EXT. HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - SAME

Wilson notices Abe's foot, bloodied and black, still bandaged with a rag...

STOMP!

He crushes Abe's foot. Abe lets out a screech of pain, forcing him to finally give up on the gun.

INT. MAIN HALL - HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - SAME

MCKINLEY

...but an answer. A test. A trial of our own tribulation. A trial of our spirit. DO YOU NOT SEE THIS TRIAL, PEOPLE?!? A TEST FROM GOD!!! A CHANCE TO OFFER STRENGTH OF OUR FAITH!!! NO DELUSION, BUT INSTEAD THE REALITY OF GOD'S WISDOM!!!

EXT. HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - SAME

Abe reaches for the closer bottle instead and SHATTERS it in half over Wilson's face!!!

Wilson falls off of Abe, not unconscious but now slowly moving, gasping for air. Blood streams down his head.

MCKINLEY (V.O.)

THE ANSWER WE WANT, THE TEST OF OUR STRENGTH NOW BEFORE US!

INT. HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - SAME

MCKINLEY

WE WILL COMPLY BY THE LORD'S NEEDS!!! THE FIRST TEST, THAT DECEIVER, I'VE ALREADY PASSED! BUT THE SECOND... it is now due...

EXT. HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - SAME

Abe grabs keys off of Wilson's belt. He stands and moves to help Melanie. Wilson doesn't give up trying to grab at Abe, but he's lost too much blood to move with any strength.

MCKINLEY (V.O.)

It is now time...

Abe manages himself to the car. He gets inside and uncuffs Melanie when he notices Wilson... still grabbing at his foot.

INT. MAIN HALL - HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - SAME

MCKINLEY

So...

(pause)

...let us pray.

EXT. HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - SAME

Abe can't contain his anger anymore... he stands over a bloodied Wilson. His head barely fits into the car's door frame. Abe grabs the police car door and...

MCKINLEY (V.O.)

In the name of the fath--

--WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! WHAM!

Abe continues until Wilson's lifeless body goes limp.

McKinley's voice stops as well.

Abe, now covered in Wilson's and his own blood, moves to Melanie. She's uncuffed, but frozen in tears.

ABE

(shakily)

Stay here... wait for me and your brother. Understand..?

Abe, only moving by adrenaline now, heads for Holy Trinity's doors.

MELANIE

(shaking)

F- Father... Father-!

ABE

Stay there!

He lifts the half shattered bottle from the ground and enters the church.

INT. LOBBY - HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Abe continues to hobble, tracking blood with each step. He now holds both the broken bottle in one hand and Wilson's gun in the other.

INT. MAIN HALL - HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Abe then bursts through the main doors of Holy Trinity. All of the robed townsfolk turn to the bloodied priest. Most importantly, McKinley's attention snaps to Abe.

He's taken aback by Abe's appearance. For once, he looks as if he fears him. They lock eyes...

Mary Anne and Marcus silence and then go for their one chance:

MARY & MARCUS
HELP US!!! FATHER, PLEASE!!! HELP!!

McKinley tries to regain his people.

MCKINLEY
(hesitant)
LADIES AND-

Abe aims the gun at McKinley and fires, nailing him the shoulder. McKinley falls to the ground.

The rest of the townsfolk begin to rush Abe as Abe leaps for Maslow.

ABE
MASLOW!!!

Maslow begins to come to from Abe's scream...

One by one people in robes run for Abe. He swings at some with his broken bottle, cutting men's forearms and drawing more blood. He sends them to retreat.

Abe aims the gun at others, but doesn't fire.

ABE (CONT'D)
STAY BACK!! STAY BACK, DAMMIT!!!

Some do, but some try to tackle at Abe. He continues to swing with his bottle.

One man tackles Abe down. Abe stabs him in the shoulder with his bottle but loses it in the man's struggle. Abe hops to his feet and keeps running.

Another man manages to restrain Abe, grabbing his gun. Abe head-butts him, but is now unarmed. He tries to flee when another man, crawling on the floor, grabs his bad foot.

Abe screams and falls. More townsfolk tackle and restrain him... it's done. Abe is pulled to his knees and dragged to McKinley's pedestal. He's right next to Maslow's post.

McKinley, now holding his bleeding shoulder, rises in front of his people. He keeps his composure to maintain strength. He smirks at Abe below him.

Abe locks eyes with Maslow. He sees the boy's tears...

MASLOW

(to Abe)

Help me! Please... please, I don't want to be here- help me...

FLASHCUT: Ruth... then Father Bowers smiling to Abe...

Maslow hasn't dissociated yet, he's still delirious.

MCKINLEY

PRODITOR!

Abe refuses to look at McKinley, he keeps his eyes on Maslow.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

TRAITOR!

ANOTHER FLASH: The nice dinner with the Millers... Richie smiling at the bar, then dead... Abe's promise... never helpless again...

Abe's fury grows on his face.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

DECEIVER!

But then... Abe remembers...

FINAL FLASHCUT: The clip from the bar... the final scene from "The Exorcist." The ultimate sacrifice.

MCKINLEY (CONT'D)

No... a test. Let us-!

Abe lets out a cry, sounding inhuman.

ABE

NOOOOOOOOOO!

Silence. Abe gives the face of a rabid animal.

ABE (CONT'D)

TAKE ME!

Shorter silence. This confuses McKinley.

ABE (CONT'D)
 TAKE ME, GOD DAMMIT! TAKE ME! TAKE
 MEEEE!

Abe rips himself from the grips of the townsfolk, throwing himself on Maslow. He grabs Maslow by the head. Maslow doesn't know how to react.

ABE (CONT'D)
 DAMN YOU! TAKE ME! TAKE ME, GOD
 DAMMIT!!!

Maslow begins to cry. Abe covers it with another screech. The townsfolk around him begin to gasp, yell, and pray...

ABE (CONT'D)
 GAHHHHHH!!!

He falls limp onto Maslow's body, his head at the boy's ear.

Maslow's crying begins to whimper away as he notices... his straps are now loose.

Abe relieves them from the boy's wrists. He then whispers into his ear.

ABE (CONT'D)
 (whispers)
 Get to your sister and run... go,
 now.

Abe, now finished with his straps grabs something from his pockets. He puts it Maslow's hands. Maslow sees:

Ruth's rosary beads.

Abe raises his body over Maslow, they're face to face. He mouths one final thing to the boy:

ABE (CONT'D)
 (mouthed)
 It's okay.
 (quietly)
 Run.

SUDDENLY-- Abe begins to contort his body. He yells again:

ABE (CONT'D)
 GAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHH!

He leaps off Maslow and charges the townsfolk who once retrained him. He punches and kicks one down. People begin to retreat from him in fear!

ABE (CONT'D)
 I SPEAK WORDS OF THE THIRD SIDE!!!
 I WILL BRING THE FIRE OF SATAN!!
 LUCIFER, THE LIGHT-BRINGER ON
 EVERY... FUCKING... ONE OF YOU!!!

People begin to charge at him, hesitantly.

ABE (CONT'D)
 (to Maslow)
 GO!
 (to the townsfolk)
 FUCK YOUR WILL!!!

Maslow makes a break for the door. His parents call to him from behind, but it doesn't stop him.

Abe continues to fight the town of Axtell, more animalistic and ruthless now...

INT. LOBBY - HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Melanie bursts into tears at the sight of Maslow, waiting for him.

MASLOW
 Melanie!

MELANIE
 MAS!

They embrace. Melanie lifts Maslow in her arms. She looks for Abe, but she sees nothing through the mob. She makes a break for the car.

MASLOW
 But mommy... daddy!!

INT. MAIN HALL - HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - SAME

There's nothing much Abe can do for himself let alone Mary and Marcus. They continue to scream for their children.

Abe continues to fight. Grabbing a candle post and swinging it at people. He flings one like a javelin at a nearby curtain, starting a fire.

McKinley can't believe his eyes, that is until they lock with Abe... he's closer to the stage now as townsfolk retreat from him.

McKinley tries to step back as Abe rushes the church's stage.

EXT. HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - SAME

Melanie gets Maslow to the car. He sees the limp body of Sheriff Herald.

MASLOW

Wha- what's that-?

MELANIE

Don't! Don't look at that! Look at me!

She straps him into the passenger side of the car. She moves to the driver's seat and puts it in gear.

Maslow leans on the window.

MASLOW

What about Mommy?! Daddy!

She hits the gas.

MASLOW (CONT'D)

(crying)

Melanie?!? MOMMY!!! DADDY!!!

Melanie doesn't listen... it's too late. She fights tears.

Maslow bangs, still holding the beads, and cries on the window as the two drive off.

INT. MAIN HALL - HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - SAME

THE FIRE BUILDS MORE AND MORE OVER THE CHURCH!

Townsfolk run trying to put it out or trying to help McKinley.

Abe and McKinley stand opposite each, waiting for who moves first. It's McKinley! He tries to tackle Abe! The two struggle, that is until McKinley trips over his robe.

The two launch off of the stage and onto the floor of the main hall.

Though disoriented from the impact, Abe manages himself on top of McKinley. Townsfolk begin to rush for them, but...

Abe takes McKinley's head and hits it into the floor, disorienting him even more.

Abe then grabs McKinley by the skull and leans to whisper a final word in his ear:

ABE
(whispering)
"Beware the blind prophets..."

Abe lifts up. McKinley's eyes widen. He gasps knowing what Abe will do:

ABE PUSHES HIS THUMBS INTO MCKINLEY'S EYES--

Abe squeezes as McKinley screams and flails his body. Abe holds it until...

BANG

A townspeople strikes Abe in the back of the head.

CUT TO BLACK.

We stay in the darkness for a second...

It's quiet...

We breathe...

We hear something: the sound of an early morning breeze. Some birds chirping.

We also hear the sound of a tight, pulling rope.

TOWNSPEOPLE
Pull!
(and...)
Pull!
(and...)
Pull!

Each side of our black screen peels open one at a time. Abe's POV, revealing...

EXT. FIELD - DAWN

The orange sunrise over the Mid-western horizon. It's dawn.

We see him. Abe. His eyes are barely able to open from his bruised and bloodied face.

He feels the wind chill his body, now that his tops has been stripped from him.

"*Deceiver*" is spelled over his chest in Latin.

With his only strength he turns his head, seeing his hands and arms. They're strapped and nailed to what we now see: the largest of the three crosses sitting outside off Axtell.

Townfolk continue to lift Abe's cross up again...

and again...

and again...

...it stops.

Abe looks to the bottom of his cross. The people of Axtell, still in their red robes, surround him.

At the bottom of each cross is a pile of wood, the same wood McKinley had his people heave from the truck the other day. On each pile lies a lifeless body.

On the pile to the left cross: Thomas in his red robes.

On the pile to the right cross: Wilson in his uniform.

On Abe's center: McKinley, still in his purple robes, and still having lifeless, gouged eyes. Flowers cover them.

A stranger emerges from the crowd and raises his hands to the crosses.

FACELESS MAN
LET US PRAY-!

He's cut off by a nearby scream:

MARY ANNE
NOOOOOOOOO!!! STOP THIS!!!!
NOOOOOOO!!!!!! GOD PLEASE! GOD
PLEASE!! MERCY!!!

Abe slowly turns his head...

Mary Anne. She's strapped and nailed, just as Abe, on a slightly smaller cross to his left.

Abe turns to his other side seeing Marcus. He quietly prays to himself on the right cross.

Both parents remain stripped and have something written on their chests in blood:

"varios usus mali"

It means "bearers of evil."

Six torches light at the bottom of the crosses, two for each, carried by young boys.

Their fates are sealed...

With nothing left to do, Abe sighs heavily and looks to the bright horizon. It's beautiful.

His eyes notice something in the distance. Something standing at a wall of nearby trees. A figure...

Ruth.

No longer in a dream, but in his tragic reality, she looks to him from afar. He looks back at her, no more fear in him... no longer helpless.

She holds her stare with him, but suddenly... she smiles. Something Abe always wanted.

I/E. CAR - HIGHWAY - SAME

The kids have made it. They drive across an open field.

Melanie still wipes tears from her face as she focuses on the road.

Maslow has stopped crying, but observes Ruth's beads in his hands. He smiles, when...

Through the side mirror, Maslow sees a bright, orange light in the distance. It's a spec in his rear view, but he knows what it is.

They drive off.

EXT. FIELD - DAWN

Abe's looks to Ruth have distracted him from the fire now reaching his bleeding feet. He feels the pain, but doesn't scream. He only looks at Ruth.

The Millers can't hold back their screams. They're completely engulfed in flames.

Axtell's people pray on their knees before them.

Abe continues to look at Ruth when he sees another figure appear behind her...

It's him, cleaned up, healthy, and fully clothed. He smiles to himself on the cross and takes Ruth's hand. The two siblings look to each other and back to the cross. Abe's real body is fully engulfed, but he still smiles and closes his eyes contently. He's now with his sister.

Ruth and the fulfilled Abe, still holding hands, turn away from the burning crosses, away from Axtell, and walk peacefully into the dawn.

They disappear as we hold on the crosses burning in the distance.

FADE TO BLACK.

END.